

**Ministry of Higher Education And Scientific Research**

**University of Al - Qadisiyah**

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**Negation in English and Arabic**

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## **(1-1) Introduction**

Every natural language has certain categories or structures, since they relate to the cognitive processes, which are expressed in one way or another. This basic assumption is so-called linguistic universals. Negation is one of the linguistic universals that are found in English, Arabic, and among others. Horn (1989: xiii) states, "all human systems of communication contain a representation of negation". Bernini and Ramat (1996:1) also argue, "Yet it is a fact that there is no known language which does not have some means or another of expressing negation". Negation is a subject of variation across languages. Every language has its own syntactic, semantic and morphological devices expressing negation. A great deal of research has been conducted by English and Arab linguists on the similarities and differences of negation in the two languages. This paper does not however study negation in its wide sense but rather it focuses on a special aspect that is the semantic scope of negation in English and Arabic. This topic is related to the semantic interpretation of ambiguous sentences including negation with certain grammatical aspects. Smith (1975, cited in Al-Omari 2008) argues that unambiguous sentences become ambiguous when they are negated. So, sentence 1.a is unambiguous whereas sentence 1.b is ambiguous. Consider the following examples

1. a. Mary ran until dark.

1. b. Mary didn't run until dark.

Sentence 1.b is not the opposite of 1.a because it might mean 'Mary stopped running before it became dark' or 'Mary didn't run until it became dark'. Modality is one of the most widely related aspects that have unexpected behavior under negation. Radden (2007: 224) argues that "The behavior of modal verbs is erratic when they occur with negation". The ambiguity arises not only because the same modal might have more than one meaning but also because the negated modals might negate either the modality or the proposition. In other words, it is not always necessary that the negated modal verbs affect the modality but in certain cases the proposition of the sentence might be negated. These two terms will be distinguished in relation to negation in English and Arabic in this study. There are other aspects of grammar that have ambiguity under negation such as quantifiers, adverbials, subordinate clauses and others. These aspects are studied apart from modality in order to consider the role of intonation in eliminating their ambiguity. Horn and Kato (2000) argue that the ambiguity might be induced when two or more logical operators are linked in the sentence. They assert that phonology plays an essential role in eliminating this ambiguity. They say the resolution of this ambiguity involves an array of factors, including phonological prominence, syntactic relations, and information structure (Horn and Kato, 2000:

The relation between intonation and negation is a necessary one because it plays a crucial role in defining the extension of the scope of negation especially the falling and fall-rise tones. Actually, this study treats intonation as a grammatical aspect not as a phonological one.

## **(1-2) Types of Negative Sentence**

Negation is the grammatical operation whereby a proposition is replaced by one that states the opposite. An affirmative form expresses the validity or truth of a basic assertion. A negative form expresses the falsity of a basic assertion. In the English language, sentences may be negated with the adverbs not and never, the determiner no, and the indefinite pronouns no one, nobody, and none as well as other negative words (Kroskrity,1984:104).

The usual strategy for rendering a positive clause negative in English is to insert the negator (the word not) between the auxiliary and the main verb. If no auxiliary was present in the basic clause, the dummy do is used. For example, Mel has not taken units in creative writing or cake decorating. Mel does not plan to take such units in the future (Ibid.).

## **(1-3) Lexical Negation**

Negation is lexico-grammatical category which has the meaning of absence of connection between some objects of reality. As linguistic universal negation is expressed at different levels: morphological, lexical, syntactic and grammatical. The idea of language level organization was recognized in the middle of 20th century in the work of J.Trager and G.Smith “An Outline of English Structure”. Language levels are “language subsystems which are characterized with the certain

set of relatively homogeneous units and rules which regulate their clustering into different classes and their use”. Language does not form levels in the process of its development but is conventionally subdivided into them (Levin ,1993:54).

Lexical negation by means of affixation has got great attention in. The fact that from a formal perspective, lexical negation, in general, and stereotype negation, in particular ‘are understudied, is partly due to the fact that not much attention has been paid to (a) the study of the semantics of nominals and (b) the study of the interaction between the semantics of derivation and the semantics of the base lexeme (Jackendoff ,1990:32) .

Lexical expressive means of negation in English are frequent. There are 16 negative affixes in English: one negative suffix (-less) and 15 negative prefixes (un-, dis-, di-, mis-, de-, non-, be-, counter-, a-, under-, ill-, mal-, pre-, ter-, ex-). All of them are word-building, there is no form-building affixes .The most productive affixes are -less, un-, in-, non-, anti-, dis-. Prefix in-, as a rule, coins negative adjectives and nouns from corresponding adjective stems (artistic → inartistic=tasteless) and seldom verbs from verbal stems. Prefix dis- forms verbs both from verbs and nouns/adjectives (disable, disapprove). Prefix un- is the only originally English prefix which stays a productive word-building element during all time of language development (wealthy →

unwealthy, grateful → ungrateful) (Serhieieva,2004:2).

Suffixal means of negative semantic expression is characteristic just for English. Negative meaning of suffix -less is “lack of what is stated in the motivating stem” (regardless – *незалежно*). Besides -less there is also used suffix -free for expression absence or shortage of something (homeless, sugar-free)(Ibid.).

#### **(1-4) Affixal Negation**

In this type of negation, the form is generally positive but the negative meaning is carried by the prefixes like ‘im-, in-, un-, non-, dis-’ etc. Look at the following sentences: He is very in sensitive to her needs. Jaskaran and Gurpreet are non -cooperative. This officer is dis honest (Ibid:218).

Affixal negation”, simply means negation carried out by or with the help of an affix” It must be specified that the term “affix” is used. It results from a process of affixation that creates a new form through derivation (and negation thereby) and creates a new word form (which is called derivative), making such an affixation part of derivational affixation (Corbin,2001:41)

Affixal negation provides an efficient way of formulating semantically negative notions, while still allowing the construction of “affirmative” sentences. The sentence “He is not happy” can be rewritten as “He is unhappy (Ibid.).

### **(1-5) Implicit Negation**

This type of negation too has a connection with the use of individual words since negation is encoded in the words themselves even though, the structure of the sentence may be positive e.g. Archana rejected the offer. They opposed the motion. We may also call this lexical negation Implicit negation includes expressions like forget, fail, doubt, and deny If negation is expressed as part of non-asserted meaning, it is implicit negation. (Ibid.).

### **(1-6) Non-verbal Negation**

As the term suggests, this type of negation has to do with words other than verbs. The negative element in this case is carried in words like nothing, no one, none, nobody, never, nowhere, few, seldom, little and few etc. Here are some examples:- No one knew the meaning of this word. I can find her no where. I have little money (Ibid.).

Longacre(2007:317) admits that negative clauses are best described in terms of modifications of canonical clauses, which by definition have positive polarity. And English has quite an array of different ways in which the modification can be done. First, note the various syntactic tests that can be used to determine which clauses are negative clauses. It is a more subtle matter than you might have thought. For example, this is a negative clause:

-We are in no way troubled.

But this is not:

- We are in no end of trouble.

And this is a negative clause:

- He has done not a single helpful thing.

But this is not:

-He has done a not unhelpful thing.

### **(1-7) Semantic Negation**

Negation is a language universal, found in all known languages, and unique to human languages. A further uniform characteristic is that sentential negation (including what could be termed „clausal negation (“ always involves “the *addition* of an overt morpheme to an affirmative clause” (Lindstad 20 .(• √: ȳ ȳ

Semantic negatives is a sentence that conveys a negative meaning irrespective of its form is a semantically negative sentence which means that a positive structure can convey a negative meaning . For example : She is unhappy. This sentence is positive at the level of sentence structure but is semantically negative since it has a negative meaning (Hopper,1999:34).

Structural negatives is a structurally negative sentence is one



which has a negative form, and generally, it has a negative meaning too. But it is possible to encode a positive meaning in a structurally negative sentence. Perhaps, it all sounds a bit confusing but it is fairly simple if one looks at the following examples:- She is not happy. This sentence is both structurally and semantically negative. It's not that she is unhappy. This sentence has a negative form but conveys a positive meaning(Ibid.).

Sentences in English may be negated (made negative) by negation markers or by sentence meaning. Negative markers are no, not, neither, none, nor, etc. Negative sentence meaning conveys negation through a variety of different means, for example, by using negating words such as decline, absent, renege, revoke, refuse, etc. (Levin ,1993:56)

These two methods of sentence negation are called structural negation and semantic negation. Structural negation is when a sentence is negated (made negative) through negation markers: Al did not wish to see the film. The negative marker not is placed after the modal verb in the sentence of negation. These sentences of negation use a modal verb that precedes the negative marker: did not (Hopper,1999:33).

Another means of semantic negation is through ironic sentences that mean the opposite of what they directly say, for example, That will teach you to go on blind dates as paraphrased actually means, That will teach you Not to go on blind dates )Ibid.).

## (1-8 ) Arabic negation transformation

Arabic negation is the process that turns an affirmative statement (I am happy). In Arabic there are few words for negation (la, ma, lan) this is very common phrase meaning it does not matter there are some example English Negation..... Arabic Negation

He is not here .....?I.na.hu lausa huna

That is not my book..... ha:tha: laisa kita:bi

Do not enter .....la: tadxl

He does not take.....?inahu la: ya?xuth

In arabic there are multiple particles for negation verbs the most common particles in modern standard arabic ( la, ma, lan) Ma: did not , la: , lam:, and lan: To negate the past form of the verb in Arabic , we use (ma:) before the verb ,it means (did not ). It simply negates the meaning of the verb without causing any change in its form as in this example , ma: ana ma sharibt alaseer

I did not drink the juice

Negation the present form of the verb in Arabic needs to be accurate .first when (la:) is used to negate the present form of the verb . It changes stense to future such as pana: la: ana la agraa aldarasI will not read the lesson . La: ana aktub hatta ashrah alqahwaaWhere as in general dislikes ma: is used instead of la: so as not to refer to futurity pana: la: puhubit bat teex

It will not like melon .pana:puhubit bat ? teex. I do not like me In

the surface structure .the negative particle not follows part of the auxiliary .but not all of it fact . If follows only the first auxiliary after tense . In not jerry could hear me . could is a case to past can is the first accruing auxiliary the refer not follow it in the surface structure we use the abbreviation Aux for the first auxiliary that comes after tense .in the following sentence Aux has been marked

1-They past can being go

2-Those dress Pl present must have bored

The auxiliary contains something besides tense . The first element following tense is Aux our transformational rule for the correct placement of not should read something like this move not to the position following the first auxiliary after tense the rule can be stated as follows:

Not +X +tense + Aux' + y = X +tense +Aux' + not + y. The information on the left of the arrow describes the structure to which the rule is applicable one with the Sm not and Aux' . If either of these conditions is not met the rule does not apply the information on the right of the arrow describes the structure after the change has been made. Whereas phrase structure rules merely expand elements . Such as Nuc into Np and Vp transformational rules rearrange ,delete, add, or substitute element , thereby alter the underlying structure of the sentence .the symbol and tense such as another sentence modifier or a noun phrase , we can simplify our by using the symbol X for any structure coming between not and tense

similarly Y stands for anything follow Aux. this may be other auxiliaries , a verb and anything that follower verb since the some process applies regard of what follows Aux.

Laisa is for non-verb sentences and it has to be connected with in the end if the thing you want to negation is feminine for example:

Laisat al-kessatu momtea

Only laisa can be switching with the noun ,example

The book was not old

Laisa al-ketabu qudeeman

al-ketabu laisa qadeeman

In verbal sentence negation elements can only be used before the verb for example:

Do not write on the wall

La taktub ala al-haet

But cannot say

\*Write do not an the wall

\*Taktub la ala al-haet (it is in correct)

(Lasti) youre not (f) and (lasna) were not also with (lam), the present verb has (skoon) on the last letter instead of (Dhamma) with (lan) the present verb has (fatha) on the last letter instead of (Dhamma)

The argues that the English sentence

The manager may be at home

might be translated by several Arabic equivalents. He gives among others the following possible translations in that yumkinu, yuhtamalu and ubbama are the Arabic equivalents of epistemic may yumkinu ran yakuuna lmudiiru filbayt, or yuhtamalu ?an yakuuna lmudiiru filbayt, or rubbama yakuunu lmudiiru filba

He was concerned with the negation of epistemic and deontic modality in the two languages. He points out that the negative particle in Arabic negates whatever follows it, in contrast to English where the same negated modals might negate the proposition in certain cases or the modality in others. He argues that the scope of negation in Arabic is marked by the position of the negative particle. Consider the following examples

laa yumkinu Pan yakuuna lmudiiru filbayt (it is not possible that the manager is at home)

umkinu ?an laa vakuna lmudiiru filbayt. it is possible that the manager is not at home It is obvious that the first sentence negates the modality while the proposition is affirmative. The second sentence negates the proposition while the modality is affirmative Al-Masarwa (2000) also conducts a study that deals with epistemic and deontic modality in English expressions that indicate modality and Arabic by comparing English modal auxiliaries and Arabic meanings including translation of English modals into Arabic and vice versa. He is also interested in the negation of modality in English and Arabic. He divides the negative

expressions that express epistemic necessity into "Negative verbs' such as laa ytumkinu and laysa mina lmumkini and "Negated nouns' such as laa budda and laa rayba. He asserts the fact that the negative particle in Arabic negates the elements that follows it, so it is obvious to determine whether the modality or the proposition is negated Esaa (1985) in his

this is studies negation in Arabic arguing that there isa strong interrelation between intonation and negation in Arabic. Consider the following example( al?9raf: 71

(Dispute you with me over names which you have devised you and your fathers without authority from Allah? This sentence seems to be interrogative at the first reading, but it is a negative sentence when read in a certain intonation. out not only by a written negative particle but also by a listened particle which is the intonation. So, he considers intonation as a particle of negation because it plays an important role in changing the state of a sentence from affirmative state to a completely different one, such as negative one without even necessity

Kalaba Aliu-n

may have more than one to use a particle of negation. For example the expression meaning, it may express the predicate, interrogation, exclamation, or negation, and this depends on the level of the tone that the speaker reads the sentence Baso (2006) in his article The Preverbal Negation Particles In Arabic is interested in studying the effect of intonation on negation especially the negative focus. He says that

"The particle maa with flat intonation is usually used to specify a negative meaning in perfect tense and it is also used as interrogative particle with rising falling rising intonation tone either in perfect or imperfect tense." (Baso,2006: 171) Consider the following examples:

maa areba zaid al9aseera

(zaid didn't drink the juice)

maa al9aseera fareba zaid

(which juice did zaid drink)

maa varab ziad Awad and Na'ami (2006) in their article studies the role of intonation in determining the meaning of the sentence. They also maintain that there are negated sentences without the necessity of using the negative particle. What indicates the meaning of negation in these sentences is not the negative particle but the intonation. Consider

(alzumur: JA Ja

(Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know)?

The interrogative particle hal doesn't need an answer because it expresses negation. It means those who know and those who do not are not equal

## (1-9) Conclusion

The findings show that there are considerable number of similarities and differences of the scope of negation in English and Arabic. In terms of the formal properties, it is necessary in English that the negative particle follows the modals as can't but not not can, by contrast, in Arabic the negative particle precedes and follows the modal as yastaTii9 ?an laa and laa yastatii9 ?an. Negation of modality in Arabic, like English, affects both modality and proposition but there is a difference in that negation of proposition and modality in Arabic depends on the position of the negative particle whether before or after the modal element. In other words, if the negative particle is before the modal this means that the modal is negated and the main verb is positive and if it is after the modal this negates the main verb, proposition, and the modal is positive. In English although the position of the negative particle is always after the modal, negation may affect the proposition or the modality. With respect to intonation, the study concludes that the semantic influence of intonationl variation, especially the falling and fall- rise contours, in determining the scope of negation in English and Arabic are the same in that the falling tone indicates the literal meaning of negation while the falling rising tone indicates the meaning of contrast.



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**A paper**

**Submitted to the Concile Collage of Education  
University of al-Qadissiya**

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1439 B.C

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَاقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا  
مَا اسْرَا سِرَّهُمَا سِرِّي

يُحْيِيهِمُ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمَ

(سورة طه - الآية ١١٤)

A

# DEDICATION

*To My family especially My Dad ,  
My Mam and My husband ...*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I OWN AN IMMENSE DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO  
MY SUPERVISOR ASST KREEM SINCE HER SOUND  
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TO THE COMPLETION OF THIS PAPER

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