A CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF NEGATION

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ABSTRACT
THE PRESENT ARTICLE FOCUSES ON THE CROSS-LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION OF NEGATION IN ENGLISH, FRENCH AND ROMANIAN. DUE TO SPACE LIMITATIONS, THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF OUR STUDY IS THE ANALYSIS OF STANDARD NEGATION ('NOT', 'NE...PAS', 'NU') AND OF SOME NEGATIVE ADVERBS AND QUANTIFIERS IN THE THREE LANGUAGES UNDER INVESTIGATION.
THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEGATION IN ENGLISH, FRENCH AND ROMANIAN WILL ALLOW US TO HIGHLIGHT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE STRUCTURING OF THIS LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON.

KEY WORDS: STANDARD NEGATION, NEGATIVE ADVERBS AND QUANTIFIERS, CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS.

A set of formal and functional (semantic, cognitive, pragmatic) features differentiates negation from the affirmative form of a sentence. Our analysis will show that cross-linguistically, negation is distinguished from the affirmative form by clear morphosyntactic peculiarities and restrictions on the occurrence of the grammatical classes.

Negation is considered to be a mental and more complex process than the affirmative form due to the fact that semantically it is richer. Another important difference consists in the fact that "semantically, negation belongs to the realm of the non-realized. Negatives and non-negative categories coding non-realized states of affairs are in many ways opposed to affirmative indicatives which prototypically code realized states of affairs." [1]

The basic way to negate a declarative verbal main clause in English is known under the name of standard negation:

(1) Engl. The girl is singing now. The girl is *not* singing.

Ro. Fata cântă în acest moment. Fata *nu* cântă în acest moment.

Fr. La fille chante à cet-instant. La fille *ne* chante *pas* à cet-instant.

Because of the absence of an equivalent for the progressive aspect in Romanian and French, the grammatical tense is rendered by the corresponding present simple. As we notice, the negation differs in the three languages. In English, the standard negation is formed with the marker '*not*' or its abbreviation *n't,* placed after the auxiliary, while in

Romanian it is converted into the particle '*nu*', preceding the verb, and in French by the terms '*ne*' placed before the verb and '*pas*', following it.

Besides the standard negation, there are other means to express negation. The most common are exemplified below:
- the negation *no* in the case of the negative answers;
- negative pronouns, adverbs and quantifiers: *nothing, not only*, *hardly, barely, little,* etc.

Due to space limitations, only the standard negation '*not*' and some negative adverbs and quantifiers will be investigated throughout our research.

Any negative utterance in English may be interpreted either as a constituent or sentential negation. The constituent negation only affects a part of the sentence while the sentential or sentence negation envisages the whole sentence. According to an important number of scholars, this classification applies to the negation '*not*' as well as to negative markers and quantifiers. [2]

"The negation that immediately precedes an embedded nonfinite verbal form (a participle, infinitival or bare form […] is constituent negation. In finite clauses, the negation that immediately follows *do*, modals, or auxiliaries such as *have* or *be* is sentential negation, while the negation that appears in other positions is constituent negation. In infinitival clauses, the negation that appears on the immediate left to auxiliaries such as *have* or *be* is sentential negation, while the negation that appears on its right is constituent negation." [3]

This negation affects not only the verbal class, which we are interested in, but also other classes such as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc. Some examples of the two types of '*not*' modifying verbs are exemplified below:

i. *Constituent negation:*

The girl admits *not* having gone to school. (negation + participle)

His daughter agrees *not* to ask him for money that month anymore. (negation + to-infinitive)

She made me *not* go to the theatre anymore. (negation + bare infinitive)

She can always *not* care about what other people say. (negation in other position)

To have *not* won the match is a great disappointment for him. (negation on the immediate right of the auxiliary *have*)

ii. *Sentential negation:*

We *did not* see her. (do + negation)

They have *not* seen him since last year. (have + negation)

To *not* have won the match is a great disappointment for him. (negation on the immediate left of the auxiliary *have*)

An interesting analysis of the distinction between the constituent and sentential negation in English based on three different tests is proposed by Klima (1964). The distinction between the constituent and sentential negations does not only apply to the negation '*not*' or *n't,* but also to negative adverbs and quantifiers. In his opinion, only the sentential negation admits the use of particles such as '*either*' (i), '*not even*' (ii), of question tags without '*not*' (iii) and '*neither*-tags' while the constituent negation is incompatible with all these structures:

i. She doesn't have a driving license and her brother either.

She has a driving license and her brother *either.

In this last case, '*either*' must be replaced by '*too*' in order to obtain a grammatical sentence.

    ii. Mary doesn't like animals, not even cats.
         *Mary likes animals, not even cats.
         He *never* sees his family, *not even* his brother.
    iii. Mary doesn't like animals, does she?
         *Mary likes animals, does she?
    iv. My mother will never accept my boyfriend, and *neither* will my father.

Nevertheless, this analysis has received criticism on the part of some linguists [4] who argue that some quantifiers functioning as objects accept negative question tags comparatively to those functioning as subject which do not:

(3) Nobody heard Mary, did (*n't) they?
     Mary heard nobody, did* (n't) she?

Linguists [5] argue that the grammatical status of Engl. *n't* / Fr. *ne* (n') / Ro. *nu (n-)* and Engl. *not /* Fr. *pas* is different based on the fact that the latter are "often termed the full or strong forms, are thought to act as specifiers of the phrase preceded by the negative element. The contracted or weak forms, by contrast, function as the head of the negative phrase. Moreover, because the former are phonologically reduced elements (often omitted in dialectal French), they need supporting by another head." [6] In English, the auxiliary '*did*' followed by the weak form *n't* form this head:

(4) She *did not* look at the boy.
     She *didn't* look at the boy.

We shall now also focus on the presentation of some aspects connected to the negation in the Romance languages under investigation.

        The negation in French is expressed by a correlative system**,** constituted by two elements called by Damourette and Pichon [7] the discordancial '*ne*' which is clitic and the forclusive (*pas, nul, aucun, rien, guere*, etc.): "En somme, il semble bien que la langue française se soit constitué deux taxièmes plus fins que l'antique taxième latin de négation; l'un, le discordantiel, qui marque une inadequation du fait qu'il aplecte avec le milieu; l'autre, le forclusif, qui indique que le fait amplecte est exclu du monde accepté par le locuteur."[8] It is important to say that orally, the discordancial is often omitted in Modern French while in Old French it used to be the main negation marker and could form the negation alone, the forclusives being only optional reinforcements.

The forclusive may precede or follow the discordancial (*ne*) but the most frequent structure is the one where *pas* is placed after the verb.

Another important type of negation in French is the so-called associative negation, known in Romanian as double or multiple negation. It is a negation with a discontinuous format, consisting in the literary language of the discordancial '*ne*' and of a second element, a semi-negation. The semi-negations (*nul, aucun…*) are 'impermeable', because they exclude the forclusive '*pas*' from their immediate context. In Romanian the simple negation '*nu*' can be reinforced like in French by another negative term namely '*nimeni, nicio, niciun, nimic, etc.*'

We can also talk about the exceptive negation '*ne…que*', which removes an element from the negation. It does not have a negative interpretation and indicates the exception because it restricts the field of the affirmative form.

The negation in Romanian may be classified into independent or dependent (or sentence-contained) negation [9]. The independent negation modifies a phrase in the sentence whereas the dependent negation is integrated into a clausal structure and may affect either a clause constituent or the whole clause. Avram [10] identifies three types of sentence-contained negation namely proper, pseudo-negation and expletive.

We consider proper negation to be the corresponding Romanian negation to the English standard negation. It may be either partial when it only affects a clause constituent or total when it affects the entire clause. This classification is known in English under the name of constituent and sentential negation. Total negation can also be of two types namely autonomous and auxiliary negation. "Autonomous negation is negation free from being licensed by other negation items. It is expressed by means of words *nu (no)* and *fără* (without) and also the negation prefix *ne-* (rough translation 'un'). On the contrary, auxiliary negation is the negation that occurs if a given licensor is also present in the structure. Licensors of auxiliary negation are just items expressing autonomous negation". [11]

Auxialiary negation is also known in linguistics as negative concord and is formed with the help of 'N-words' [12] such as '*nimeni (nobody), nimic (nothing), niciodată (never)*'. Cases of autonomous (5a) and auxiliary (5b) negations are exemplified below:

(5) a. Ro. Maria *nu* scrie.

    Engl. Mary is *not* writing.

  b. Maria *nu* face *nimic*.

   Mary is (*not) doing *nothing*.

In (5b) the auxiliary negation '*nimic*' requires the presence of the autonomous negation '*nu*' in Romanian while in English the negation '*not*' cannot be used with the negative marker '*nothing*'.

Nevertheless, Avram mentions that in some contexts, *N-words* can also express autonomous negation but we shall not insist upon this aspect because we shall not deal with it during our corpus-based research.

The pseudo-negation is the one formed with the preposition *fără* (without), which confers a negative interpretation to the constituent it modifies:

(6) Ro. Maria a intrat în clasă *fără* să salute.

    Engl. Mary entered the classroom *without* saying hello.

The expletive negation consists of grammatically marking a constituent with the negation '*nu*' even though semantically it has no negative correspondence:

(7) Ro. Mi-e frică să *nu* mă prindă.

    Engl. Literal translation: *I am afraid that someone could *not* catch me.

    I'm afraid that someone could catch me.

It is interesting to observe that from the three languages under investigation, Romanian is the only one in which dependent negation and pro-phrase negation are considered to be homonymous. English and French need two items '*no / not*' and '*non / ne*' in order to express both independent and dependent negation while Romanian only needs the particle '*nu*' in both cases:

(8) Ro. Eşti acasă în seara aceasta?

    Nu, nu sunt.

    Engl. Are you at home tonight?

    No, I am not.

Fr. T'es chez toi ce soir?

Non, je n'y suis pas.

Furthermore, French needs an additional item namely the forclusive *pas*.

There are other differences between the negations in the three languages that we shall only briefly mention. In order to answer *yes / no* questions, Romanian and French possess three items namely '*da / ba da / nu*' and '*oui / si / non*' while English only has two*: 'yes / no'.* If things are clear for the use of '*da / nu*' and '*oui / non*' as the equivalents of '*yes / non*', the forms '*ba da*' and '*si*' might cause problems, for instance, to English speakers who want to learn these languages. '*Ba da*' and '*si*' are the positive answers given to a negative (yes / no) question.

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[8]. Our translation into English: "In sum, it seems that the French language has established two taxemes thinner than the old Latin taxeme of negation: one, the discordancial, marking an inadequacy because it supports the environment; the other, the forclusive, indicating that the embracing fact is excluded from the world accepted by the speaker."

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