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0. Diachronically as well as synchronically negation is a language universal. What is specific to a given language at a given stage of history is its surface manifestations. For example, modern Romance languages like French, Italian and Spanish, as well as classic Greek, allow double negation whereas in today’s so-called standard English (SE) it is taboo. In Old English (OE) (700-1100) and Middle English (ME) (1100-1500), however, double negation is a common phenomenon.

1. Following a generative semantic model, the sentence negation (NEG) appears in deep structure as in (1).

(1)

The tree means that NEG is considered as an ordinary predicate, as in such sentences as It is not the case that she is happy (=she is not happy). Justification of such syntactic analysis of negation may be found in the data regarding children’s language
acquisition. It is universally observed that at a certain stage of children's linguistic development children express negation by tacking on no at the end of an affirmative sentence like 'Bread no' (meaning for one 'It is not so that I want bread') and 'I sleep no.' If it is the case, as David McNeill (1970) claims, that children at the earliest stage in life speak the deep structure of the language, we see in manners of children's language acquisition some empirical evidence for the argument that (1) represents the deep structure of negation.

2. In surface structure in Modern English (NE), NEG appears after the first auxiliary verb (AV) and before the main verb (MV), excepting the cases in which NEG appears after the MV when the verb be and have are employed as the MV without any AV (though the case of the verb have is for the most part a British usage). The pre-position of NEG to MV makes a contrast to the post-position in some other languages such as Japanese, in which NEG is invariably placed after MV. English, an SVO language, is pre-positional and Japanese, an SOV language, is post-positional not only with regard to the case markings but also with regard to the location of NEG in relation to that of the MV.

2.1. A very particular feature in English negativization in contrast to Japanese is what E. Klima (1964:267) calls the negative attraction rule. Compare the following examples.

(JI) Dare mo kare o suka nai.
anybody - him - likes not (mo and o are case markers)

The literal English counterpart of (JI) is (Ela).

(Ela) ☆ Anybody does not like him.

(Ela) is an underlying structure but as a surface structure it is not grammatical. In this case the transformation of negative attrac-
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tion is obligatory. And we obtain

\[(Elb) \textit{not anybody} \text{ likes him.}\]
\[(Elc) \textit{Nobody} \text{ likes him.}\]

The passive sentence of \((Ela)\) as well as that of \((Elc)\) is grammatical.

\[(Eld) \textit{He is not liked by anybody.}\]
\[(Ele) \textit{He is liked by nobody.}\]

It is concluded that as long as NEG precedes Indefinites (INDEF) like ‘anybody’ ‘anything’ ‘somewhere’ and ‘either’ negative attraction transformation is optional but otherwise it is obligatory. In other words, NEG must precede INDEF in an SVO language and if NEG is preceded by INDEF it can no longer remain as a separate word constituent of a sentence but must be incorporated into an indefinite like ‘nobody’ ‘nothing’ ‘nowhere’ and ‘neither’.

3. One more aspect of contemporary English negation to be mentioned before we begin to trace the evolution of the English NEG is the non-standard multiple negation which is widely observed in dialects of black and white communities alike.

In dealing with double negation it must be stated that there are two kinds of double negation. One is double negation in logic, which rule says that two negatives make an affirmative. For example,

\[(E2a) \textit{She is not unhappy} (=\textit{She is neither happy nor unhappy/she is happy to some extent}).\]
\[(E2b) \textit{She is unhappy}.\]

Though the adjective constituent is negative, \((E2b)\) is affirmative as a sentence. Although logically and semantically double negation, the first kind is syntactically, that is as a sentence, only single
negation. It is for this reason that (E2a) is a grammatical sentence in SE.

The other kind is double (or multiple) negation in which a repeated negative means, not an affirmative, but a negative. What linguists mean by double negation is this second kind.

(E3a) ☆ She didn’t play with none of us.

If (E3a) could be taken as double negation of the first kind, it would, according to the logic, mean (E3b).

(E3b) She played with all of us.

However, this is not the case. (E3a), a specimen of syntactic double negation given by Labov et al. (1968: 275), is expressed in SE as (E3c) or (E3d).

(E3c) She didn’t play with any one of us.

(E3d) She played with none of us.

What makes (E3a) ungrammatical in SE is the fact that it contains two sentential negatives. First, (E3c) with one sentential NEG can be taken as an underlying structure of (E3a). Then to (E3c) we apply the negative attraction rule discussed under 2.1. and we obtain (E3d). After applying the first half of the negative attraction rule and obtaining the negative indefinite compound word none, however, we refrain from carrying out the not-deletion transformation which is the latter half of the SE negative attraction rule. In this way we get (E3a) with two sentential negatives. Because SE prohibits the occurrence of more than one sentential negative in the same sentence, (E3a) is ungrammatical.

In conclusion, we point out that in non-standard multiple negation the revised rule of negative attraction (that which does not delete not after the formation of negative indefinite) is applied multiple times generating multiple negative indefinites in the same
and one negative sentence as the following example shows.

(E4) I ain't gonna sit in no chair and let no crazy lawyer
tell me no lies about no law that no judge has in no
law books that no smart politician wrote or nothin'
like that, nohow.

(An example of nonstandard white speech given by Labov
et al. 1968: 273, also cited by Traugott 1972: 194)

4. The general history of the syntax of English negation is
schematized by Otto Jespersen (1917: 6-14) as follows.

(E5) (i) ic ne secge.
(ii) I ne seye not.
(iii) I say not.
(iv) I do not say.
(v) I don’t say.

In light of syntactic history of English we believe that the following
should be inserted between (iii) and (iv):

(vi) I not say.

In spite of the surface structural differences all six share
the same underlying structure and carry the same meaning:

(E6)
4.1. (i) ic ne secge.

The characteristic of this construction in OE is that the independent negative abverb ne invariably occurs before the auxiliary if there is one as in (OE1) and otherwise before the finite main verb as in (OE2).

(OE1) ic furþum anne anlepne ne mæg geþencean besuþan Temese 'I even one single not can remember in the south Thames = I cannot remember a single one south of the Thames.'
—King Alfred's Preface to Pope Gregory's Pastoral Care (c. 800) (Bright 1908: 26)

(OE2) and him man ne sealde
‘and him man not gave = and to him no one gave anything.’ — Luke 15: 16b The West Saxon Gospels (c. 750)
(an example from early OE, early West Saxon, Flom 1930:167)

One consequence of ne regularly preceding the verb in OE negation is the coalesced form of negative finites such as næs = ne + wæs 'was not,' nis = ne + is 'isn't,' næfp = ne + hæfp 'does not have,' nolde = ne + wolde 'would not' and others, which had almost all, excepting nil = ne + will 'will not,' become extinct before the NE period.

(OE3) ic wene þætte nauht monige begeondan Humbre neren 'I believe that not many beyond the Humber not were—I believe that there were not many beyond the Humber.' — King Alfred's Preface to Pope Gregory's Pastoral Care (c. 800) (Bright 1908: 26)
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4.2. (ii) *I ne seye not.*

This is the typical form of negation in ME. It is the double
negation forbidden in today’s SE. The second sentential NEG was
spelled *nawiht, nowiht, noaht, noght, nat,* and so on before it
arrived at the present form *not.* It is a coalesced form of *ne + â + wiht* ‘not + ever, always + creature, wight, thing = nothing.’
It is felt that *ne* in ME is rather too short to get enough attention,
hence strengthening the preceding *ne* by a stronger negative *not* is
required.

(ME1) Bot he *ne* held it noght ‘But he not held it not.’
 — “Song of Edward” by Laurence Minot (c. 1350)
 (Fernand Mosse 1952: 235)

(ME2) Ne death, alls! *ne wol nat* han my lyf ‘Nor death, 
alas! not will not have my life = Even death, alas, 
refuses to take my life.’ — Geoffrey Chaucer: 
Canterbury Tales ‘The Pardoner’s Tale’ 727 (c. 
1400) (F. N. Robinson 1961: 152)

Not only double but multiple negation was common:

(ME3) He *never* yet *no* vileynye *ne* sayde
In al his lyf unto *no* maner wight.
He was a verray, parfit, gentil Knyght.
‘He never yet no discourteously not spoke in all his 
life unto no kind of person. He was a true, perfect, 
well-bred knight.’
 — Geoffrey Chaucer: Canterbury Tales ‘The Pro-
logue’ 70-72 (c. 1400) (Robinson 1961: 18)

Of course, single negation was also used side by side with double
and multiple negation. In verse, the choice of negation was decided
by the rhyme, by the number of syllables needed or by the placing of emphasis. Multiple negation in the quote increases the emphasis and leads to the climax in the last line.

4.2.1. It is interesting to observe that some Romance languages like French, Spanish and Italian retain the same syntactic structure of negation as (ii), as the following examples from French show:

(F1) Je n'aime pas cette affaire. 'I don't like this affair.'
   I not like not this affair

(F2) Je ne vois personne 'I don't see anybody.'
   I not see nobody

(F3) Rien n'est impossible 'Nothing is impossible.'
   Nothing is impossible not

Thus in French double marking for negation is common as it was in ME.

4.2.2. Another interesting case of double negation of the type (ii) is observed in Old Japanese (OJ) (600-800) and Early Middle Japanese (EMJ) (800-1100). For example,

(OJ1) otoko domo mo na aruki so
   male not walk not (domo is a plural marker and mo a case marker)

'menfolks, (please) don't walk.'
— Taketori Monogatari (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter) (c. 800) (K. Hashizume 1954: 162)

As a double negative, na...so in OJ and EMJ corresponds to 'ne...not' in ME. The form, however, was used to express prohibition. It is known that the na...so had two variants: na...sone and na...koso.

(OJ2) yuki na fumi sone '(Please) don't step on the snow.'
   snow not step on not
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— part of a poem from Manyoshu (The Oldest National Edition of Poetry) (c. 750) (Ekoyama and Matsumura 1958: 253)

(OJ3)  

\[
\text{kaze na fuki koso 'Thou wind, (please) don't blow.'}
\]

wind not blow not

— Ibid.

The Japanese particles of prohibition na and so incorporate some interesting syntactic history. The development is along lines similar to the English negative not:

(J2) (i)  

\[
\text{na aruki 'Don't walk.' (OJ)}
\]

not walk

(ii)  

\[
\text{na aruki so '(Please) don't walk.' (OJ—EMJ)}
\]

not walk not

(iii)  

\[
\text{aruki so 'Don't walk' (EMJ—MJ)}
\]

walk not

(iv)  

\[
\text{aruku na 'Don't walk.' (Modern Japanese)}
\]

walk not

In Modern Japanese only the type (iv) is used. It is noticed that in OJ and EMJ the NEG na preceded the V as in (J2) (i) and (J2) (ii) whereas in Modern Japanese the NEG na is placed in its proper postverbal position as in (J2) (iv).

4.3. (iii) I say not.

At the preceding stage, that is, in 4.2. (ii) I ne seye not, ne was pronounced with so little stress that eventually it disappeared altogether, bringing about the form 4.3. (iii). At this stage of the evolution of English negatives, the not, which originally meant 'nothing' (cf. NE 'nought') as discussed under 4.2., becomes the regular negative in all cases. This point of practical disappearance
of *ne* and the exclusive use of *not* was reached in the fifteenth century (Jespersen 1917: 9). Checking sentential negation in *Genesis* and *Exodus* in the Wycliffite Bible, we see that type (iii) was already the dominant pattern of negation by the 1380’s.

(ME4) forso> he wiste not pat sche was pe wyf of his sonn
   ‘indeed he knew not that she was the wife of his son’ — *Genesis* 38: 16b, *the Wycliffite Bible* (c. 1380) (Lindberg)

(ENE1) feare not to goo downe in to Egipte
   ‘fear not to go down into Egypt’
   — *Genesis* 46: 3, *William Tyndale’s Bible* (1534)

4.3.1. It should be noted in passing that such apparently identical surface structures in modern colloquial English as ‘I hope not’ and ‘I’m afraid not’ are derived from completely different underlying structures.

(E7)

The content of the embedded sentence which is deleted is the already established topic of conversation. E. g. ‘Will it rain?’ — ‘I hope [it will] not [rain].’
4.4. (vi) I not say.

The appearance of this type of negation might be explained as follows. As the OE NEG ne fell into disuse and the type (iii) became a common pattern the emphatic meaning of not came to be felt less and less until it became a mere function word of negation. Then the NEG regained the original preverbal position.

(ENE2) As a blindfold Bull, at random fares, And where he hits nought knowes, and whom he hurts nought cares.
— Spenser: *Fairy Queene* II 4.7. (1590)
(Cited by Visser 1969: 1533)

(ENE3) For who not needs, shall neuer lacke frend.

(ENE4) I not doubt he came alive to Land.

As may be inferred from the examples type (vi) is quite frequent in Shakespeare. But in our observation this type is very rare in the Biblical translations either by Wyclif (c. 1380), Tyndale (1534) or King James (1611), in which 4.3. (iii) is the most frequently employed form of negation.

4.5. (iv) I do not say.

Of course, this is the structure of negation in present-day English which is discussed under 2. It is considered as a compromise of the two conflicting forms (iii) and (vi). The position of the NEG between the auxiliary and main verbs satisfies both demands of positioning the NEG before and after V. The establishment of this form is due to the development of periphrastic ‘do’ which came to be regularly employed in questions as well as negations.
(ENE5) I know...thow...reapest where thou didst not sow and gatherest where thou strawedst not.
— Matt. 25: 24, Douag Bible (1582)
(Cited by Visser 1969: 1530)

(ENE6) thou takest vp that thou layedst not downe, and reapest that thou didst not sowe.
(Cited by Visser 1969: 1531)

From the examples above we see that both type (iii) and type (iv) went side by side in ENE. Actually the three types including (vi) were competing in ME and ENE and the rivalry ended in the victory of (iv) by the end of the seventeenth century.

4.6. (v) I don't say.

In NE colloquialism, type (v) is the rule. The contracted form is developed because, as a major reason, it is felt that in the position of type (iv) the NEG not cannot keep up its strongly stressed pronunciation.

(E8) aren't, can't, couldn't, didn't, doesn't, don't, hadn't, hasn't, haven't, mayn't, mightn't, shan't, shouldn't, won't, wouldn't.

Most of these contracted forms occur in writing in the late seventeenth century. Jonathan Swift, the author of A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue (1712), considered the then already common use of contracted forms as corruption of the English language:

(E9) Sir, I cou'dn't get the things you sent for all about Town — I thot to ha' come down myself, and then I'd ha' brout 'um; but I han't don't, and I believe
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I can't do't.
— Jonathan Swift: a letter to the Tatler (No. 230)
(1710) (Cited by John Nist 1966: 295)

The long evolution of surface forms of English negation has ended up with type (v). Comparing all the stages of development and particularly the first and the last: (i) ic ne secge and (v) I don’t say, we see that the English NEG, after one circular movement round the V, changing its morphological figures on the way, has returned to its proper preverbal position.

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Klima, Edward. “Negation in English,” in Fodor, J. A. and J. J.


