

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT MEANS OF NEGATION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Natayou Rosyane Florine
(Sumy State University)

Research supervisor – *phD. Chernyuk N. I.*

Natural language has a rich arsenal of negation. There are a number of dimensions criteria according we can to where classify negative expressions into groups. We make a distinction between negation in the asserted meaning and negation in the non-asserted content. We call the first group explicit negation, and the second – implicit negation. 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*. Implicit negation, on the other hand, includes expressions like *forget, fail, doubt, and deny*.

Any utterance can convey an array of meanings. A very basic distinction is the one between asserted meaning – commonly referred to as what is said in the Gricean sense or meaning at the at-issue level, and non-asserted meaning. Asserted meaning is the truth-conditional literal meaning of a sentence; non-asserted meaning includes additional dimensions beyond literal meaning, for example, presuppositions, conversational implicatures, conventional implicatures, etc. These latter dimensions of meaning are not what a sentence asserts, but are nonetheless part of what a speaker conveys in using the sentence. In the widely used Gricean terms, non-asserted meaning can be thought of as speaker meaning (pragmatic meaning), as opposed to asserted meaning, which corresponds sentence meaning (semantic meaning). For example: If you ask Mary, "Are you coming to the party tonight?" and she responds, "I have some work to do", two levels of meaning can be distinguished from her utterance. What the sentence asserts is that Mary has work to do. What the sentence does not assert, but nevertheless conveys, is that Mary can't come to the party. We call this inference conversational *implicature*. In this case, the speaker implicitly conveys a negative meaning (implicature) by using an affirmative sentence. Although the precise division of labor between asserted and non-asserted meaning, or semantic and pragmatic meaning, is still under intense debate, a few linguistic tests have been developed to distinguish the two. As for the classification of negative expressions, we define two classes of negation based on the source of the negative meaning. If negation is expressed as part of the asserted meaning of an utterance, it is explicit negation; if it belongs to the non-asserted meaning, it is implicit negation. Overt

negations, such as *no* and *not*, mark grammatical negation and obviously contribute to the assertion, and hence constitute explicit negation. But it is important to note that 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, are nevertheless syntactically and semantically negative under a number of well known, and by now classic, diagnostics. For instance, these expressions 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*. Some examples are given below. So/ Neither-diagnostic: (1) 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; (2) 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*.

At the same time, it has also been noted that these syntactic diagnostics are sufficient but not necessary properties of explicit negation. For some cases of explicit negation, although a negative meaning is asserted, the syntactic tests above do not apply. The exclusive focus particle «*only*» provides such an example. By saying *Only John read the article*, one asserts content equivalent to the exceptive sentence *Nobody other than John read the article*. It is generally agreed that this negative exclusive component is part of the asserted meaning of *only*. The brief discussion above shows that semantically asserted negation does not map uniformly onto syntactic or morphological negation. Some explicit negations contain overt negative morphology (*no*, *nobody other than*); some contain no overt morphology but pass syntactic diagnostics of negation (*few*); and yet others are neither morphologically nor syntactically negative, but nevertheless assert a negative meaning (*only*). We call all these cases in which negation is asserted "explicit" negation, regardless of the morphosyntactic realization. Implicit negation, on the other hand, involves negative meaning whose source is beyond what is said on the surface. For current purposes, we consider the class of "emotive" factive predicates, which trigger negative inferences, though their negative content is not asserted. (3) To summarize, negative meaning can arise from two

sources: either from the assertion (what is said) or from the non-asserted content (e.g. negative implicatures).

Перекладацькі інновації: матеріали IV Всеукраїнської студентської науково-практичної конференції, м. Суми, 13–14 березня 2014 р. / редкол.: С. О. Швачко, І. К. Кобякова, О. О. Жулавська та ін. – Суми : Сумський державний університет, 2014. – 172 с.