

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT NEGATION IN THE NATURAL LANGUAGE

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The article deals with the phenomenon of negation in language and speech. Their logic, psychology and linguistic features are being discussed, as well as the functional aspect and stylistic potential of the phenomenon are under analysis. The study also reveals some important formal characteristics of the explicit and the implicit modes to express the negation. Further research directions are put forward.

Key words: negation, pleonastic negation, explicit negation, implicit negation, litote.

As is known, Charles Caleb Colton, an English writer and collector, once claimed, *“Knowledge is two-fold, and consists not only in an affirmation of what is true, but in the negation of that which is false.”* Indeed, negation is one of the grammatical categories that have existed in almost every language since ancient times. Therefore, it occupies a special place in the traditional and contemporary studies of language and speech as one of the basic mechanisms of conceptual knowledge. However, although some aspects of this problem have already been considered in scientific literature, it still requires further elaboration and systematization.

As it follows, the topicality of our investigation is determined by the necessity to identify the basic patterns and principles of the use of words and phrases serving as negation indicators in the natural language. The aim of the present paper is to analyze the possible means of explicit and implicit negation in language and speech.

Establishing the theoretical basis, we proceed from the works by L.G. Babenko, L.S. Barkhudarov, N.N. Boldyrev, I.R. Galperin, A.I. Gorshkov, Y.V. Kazarin, L.M. Koltsova, Yu.M. Lotman, O.A. Lunina, N.S. Valgina and other acknowledged linguists.

For many centuries of the intellectual life of the humanity and up to now negation has been the study object for a number of sciences — philosophy, formal logic, linguistics. Possibly, it is due to this multiplicity of approaches that there is still no universal and definite answer on the nature of a negative statement, as well as the negation category on the whole.

Negation in philosophy is accepted as “a philosophical category expressing a particular type of relations between two consequent stages and states of a developing object” [7. P. 471]¹. In other words, according to the Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary, youth is opposed to maturity which is in its turn replaced by the old [6]. The term

¹ Translation here and on is done by the author of an article. — *L.L.*

itself was introduced to philosophy in the 18th century by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He treated the notion idealistically saying that the nature of negation lies predominantly in the development of an idea, of a thought. Later on in the 19th century, the materialists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels suggested that negation is in itself an integral part of the material reality, meaning that the old is succeeded by the new, the dying is replaced by the emerging and so on, which makes the so-called dialectical negation.

In formal logic negation is defined “as the logical equivalent of the pattern *it is wrong that...*, or just of the particle *not*; also as a process formalizing the logical properties of those words” [5. P. 947]. Besides, it can be described “as a logical operation setting the untrue judgment against true, the false judgment against genuine, it is an operation revealing the discrepancy between the predicate and the subject” [2. P. 8]. The theory goes further on saying that the absence of a definite feature, the non-existence or the lack of some feature, in an object are existent in the objective reality. Consequently, the non-existence of some feature is the essential property of the object in question alongside with the possible antagonistic existence of the same feature in the same object (which is in fact typical of a statement). It follows that knowing that something exists as well as knowing that something does not exist are both informative and actually encourage the true understanding of an object or an event. Though there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it, still, the important fact is that the most of the human cognitive activity is normally practice-focused. It is directed towards discovering the object nature, in the first place the object properties which are existent and not non-existent. It aims at understanding of what the object, or event is characterized with instead of what the object, or event, is not characterized with [2].

In this way we conclude that in terms of philosophy negation is interpreted as the process of the development of the society and the process of its transition to the state opposite to previous. In terms of formal logics negation is a mechanism for making one sentence out of the other one. The latter sentence is true only when the former is untrue and vice versa. Linguistics is not satisfied with either definition. For language constructions with a negation are found not only in affirmative sentences but also in interrogative sentences and commands which do not actually operate with the true-untrue criteria. Moreover, it is the basic principle of the formal logics for a statement (no matter whether it is a negation or not) that it can have only one precise meaning, whereas in the language study the statement with a negation is polysemantic thus leaving the door open for alternative interpretations.

The structure and semantic specifics make negation one of the most complicated concepts shaping it as a special tool for knowledge representation by means of natural language. Besides, there is no language in the world where there is no negative forms. This fact, according to V.A. Plungyan, predetermines the role of negation as one of the components of the so-called “universal grammatical set” [4. P. 94—100]. In fact, numerous linguistic schools and scholars define the idea and the meaning of negation quite differently. And there is only one point out of question: negation belongs to the notions that originally need no interpretation and make the semantic primitives’ corpus.

The most universal and widely accepted among linguists is the definition of negation suggested by A.M. Peshkovsky, which is “expressing through all possible language

means (morphological, lexical, syntactical, etc.) that there is no actual connection between the elements of a given statement” [3. P. 386—391]. A little bit further from the purely linguistic understanding is Ch. Bally’s interpretation. He says that a negation is when a given affirmative sentence is rejected by the speaker as a false statement [1. P. 354—355]. Negation is treated as a speech act here. The criticism is that it is not only simple affirmative sentences that may include a negation. A negation is found in conditionals, compound sentences, various other parts of a speech act which do not fulfill any communication tasks of the sender.

While in modern linguistics there is still no precise and overall definition, a set of basic characteristic features and the part it plays both in language-as-a-system and in language-in-action can be described. The predominant function of negation is obviously to express the speaker’s attitude towards the world of things and events. It may be equally well done within a whole sentence, its part, a separate phrase or even within a word. Moreover, the potentials are varied from one language to another. In particular, the Russian language mainly operates through the *multiple (cumulative)* negation meaning the agreement of a negative pronoun, adverb or conjunction and a negative predicate, e.g., Russ. *В наших магазинах никогда ничего не найдешь* [1. P. 534—555]. Contrary to it, in other languages (in English, for instance) multiple negation is a deviation from the linguistic norm and is not correct, e. g., Eng. *I watched it for a moment, but nobody emerged, so I got down again*. Important is that the rule of a single negation is true within a single sentence. If there are two or more simple sentences making a complex or a compound sentence the negation may be expressed in each of those, e.g., Eng. *This is no doubt another reason why she never went into films...; This was impossible for the simple reason that there was nowhere where we could inquire*. Undoubtedly there are certain exceptions. A double negation is grammatically allowed in verbal collocations, e.g., Eng. *When I am away from her I feel sure that she cannot be so naive as not to have some sort of appreciation of what is going on under her nose*. But a too complicated sentence may cause quite unexpected and unpredictable semantic effects (allegoric, ambiguous, unclear, etc.)

One more semantic peculiarity of the negation lies in the logic rule that negation of a negation equals a confirmation. The idea is that two negations put together produce an opposite confirmative effect, e.g., Eng. *She has a speaking voice not unlike Anna’s*. Still, it must be taken into account that two negations don’t fully neutralize each other. In terms of stylistics, such a combination is analyzed as a particular expressive means (see: I.V. Arnold, I.R. Galperin, V.A. Kukharenko and others) — *litote*, which serves to lessen the degree of the quality described (V.V. Gurevitch) for a compound statement is, as a rule, weaker than a simple one (M.M. Filippova), e.g., Rus. *нередкий ≈ довольно частый и частый; не без страха ≈ с некоторым страхом и со страхом*; or Eng. *not impossible и possible, not uncommon и common*. To be fair, those syntactical constructions are rather rare.

A particular type of negation is made by the so-called pleonastic negation normally expressed in a subordinate clause through verbs with an inherent negation, e.g., Rus. *отрицать, запрещать, сомневаться, удерживаться, бояться и т.п.*; or Eng. *deny, forbid, doubt, hold back, fear, etc.*

Besides, Linguistic Encyclopedia points out a special group of paired words linked by steady semantic equalities. Here belong pairs like in Russian: *разрешаю — требую: не разрешаю... = требую не...; разрешаю = не требую не; не требую = разрешаю не; требую = не разрешаю не*. Among other parts of speech examples of paired words are *возможно — обязательно, могу («имею разрешение») — обязан («должен»), все — некоторые («хотя бы некоторые»)* и др. А.М. Peshkovsky illustrated this phenomenon by the equality *не могу не признаться = должен признаться* [1. P. 354—355].

Syntactically speaking, there is similar diversity and almost unlimited potentiality as well: the semantics of negation may be conveyed through both main and secondary members of the sentence. From the morphological viewpoint words expressing negative semantics may be any part of speech. In fact, one conceptual characteristic is represented in all the above cases. This is the *absence or lack of some object, thing, quality*, etc. The means and mechanisms involved are obviously far too different, and the negative message appears at either syntactical, or morphological, or semantic, or other language level.

The enigmatic nature of the negation also lies in the fact that the idea of *negativeness* is not expressed explicitly alone through formal grammatical means. Actually implicit negative meanings may arise through the use of the hidden non-grammatical mechanisms. No doubt the former models and patterns are well studied and fully described, while the latter demand an accurate, systematic and multidimensional analysis.

It can't be argued that a negative message or an idea does not necessarily require negative grammar markers. At the semantic level it is often materialized quite indirectly, implicitly. It is particularly the case if there is a necessity to make a hint, to reflect the author's emotional and evaluative attitude towards an events or statements. Remarkable is that in the case of implicit negation it's not one linguistic level that it operates upon, it is the complex interaction of all means of the meaning expression (lexical, morphological, syntactical, semantic and so on).

Regularly implicit negation forms are made up by verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, and even prepositions and conjunctions as well. They all may contain negative components in the semantic structure, e.g., Rus. *избегать, почти не, недостаток, нехватка, немногие, мало, против, но*, etc. and Eng. *avoid, scarcely, lack, few, against, but*, etc.

Implicit negation is also revealed in rhetorical questions with a negative underlying theme, in unreal conditionals reflecting the incongruence between the desired and the real, in a few set expressions like Eng. *used to*, Rus. *бывало*. Though very conventionally but such patterns may compose a category of an implicit negation. Since even despite the lack of formal (grammatical) markers the degree of the quality they originally name is obviously too low and may be treated as irrelevant.

Still, there is some criticism of the implicit negation theory. It runs that non-grammatical (implicit) means can not be considered a special class, or a group, for the general negative meaning in those structures is not directly (explicitly) stated, it does not involve any formal grammatical markers. The crucial argument is that the negative meaning here is constituted by means of various communication conditions and contexts (I.V. Andreeva, E.V. Paducheva).

Summing up, the implicit modes of expressing negation are not sufficiently studied in contemporary linguistics, and the causes are quite simple — the complexity of the phenomenon. First, it demonstrates no direct markers of negation like *not*, *neither... nor*, etc., which really make the perception of a negative concept much easier. Second, the semantics of such utterances fully depends on the linguistic micro-context. The contents of an utterance with an implicit negation may be deciphered only as a part of particular conditions of communication. It is a reflection of subjective and limited judgments of the speaker (in a literary text — of an author, narrator, character) about the world, about himself, about his emotional state.

To interpret adequately an utterance with an implicit negation is not a simple task. What is more, it's vitally important for the right and correct interpretation of a real communicative situation, or the one depicted in a literary text, for the proper interpretation of the speaker's or author's message. Furthermore, the crucial significance of the implicit negation phenomenon in the modern world is rooted in its internal psychological potential. The contemporary civilization discovered a powerful tool to manipulate human minds and behaviour. It is neurolinguistic programming, propaganda, hidden advertising and the like. In this connection linguists are granted the privilege and the responsibility to study, to analyze, to learn the linguistic mechanisms of those, to discover and to interpret the hidden senses. The first step to succeed in it is the attentive and thoughtful perception of the oral and written speech, and then comes the scientific approach.

The research horizons of the problem discussed are even broader. No profound research has been held yet in terms of comparative and contrasting linguistics within two or more languages, in terms of linguaculturology, in terms of theoretical and practical translation. For the human society today is multicultural, multilingual, the society which needs the mutual adaption of a variety of linguistic and cultural phenomena, it looks sensible and beneficial for the linguistic science to study such complicated notions.

Thus, having regarded the essence of our research work, it seems logical to point out the general conclusions of the whole investigation. We came to the conclusion that the category of negation possesses a number of characteristics: *absence*, *lack of smth.*, *negative evaluation*, etc. and is present at different layers of language (most often lexical, but also sometimes morphological and syntactical). In addition, it can be expressed with the help of various linguistic means (both grammatical and ungrammatical) to communicate the author's idea about a character, a situation or a problem considered in the work of fiction. Therefore, the research work under consideration makes a complete picture of the concept of negation functioning in modern linguistics and in modern English literature in particular. These are the results of my modest investigation. Thus, we consider the tasks of our final research paper complete.

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ЭКСПЛИЦИТНОЕ И ИМПЛИЦИТНОЕ ОТРИЦАНИЕ В ЕСТЕСТВЕННОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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Статья посвящена анализу феномена отрицания в языке и речи. В работе обсуждаются характеристики отрицания в естественном языке с точки зрения логики, психологии и лингвистики, рассматриваются функционально-стилистические особенности отрицания как лингвистического явления. Особое внимание уделяется формам и механизмам выражения отрицания эксплицитно и имплицитно, предлагаются дальнейшие направления исследования проблемы.

Ключевые слова: отрицание, плеонастическое отрицание, эксплицитное отрицание, имплицитное отрицание, литота.