

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SYNTACTIC
FEATURES AND THE USES OF ENGLISH AND
VIETNAMESE NEGATIVE SENTENCES IN SOME
CONTEXTS**

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M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(Research report)

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Vietnamese learners of English, especially learners at the levels of elementary and pre-intermediate often produce some ill-formed sentences in expressing their negative ideas in English as follows:

(1) **Haven't** you written to Mary? [28, p.346]

Yes. I haven't. (to express agreement)

or **No. I have.** (to express disagreement)

(2) **I not** agree.

(3) **Never** I can do that!

The ungrammatical sentences (1), (2) and (3) result from the transfer of the Vietnamese patterns respectively:

(4) **Bạn chưa** viết thư cho Mary à?

Vâng. Tôi chưa viết.

hoặc là **Không. Tôi đã viết rồi.**

(5) **Tôi không** đồng ý.

(6) **Không đời nào** tôi có thể làm được như thế.

Sentences (1), (2) and (3) are ill-formed and certainly unacceptable in English whereas sentences (4), (5) and (6) are well-formed and quite natural in Vietnamese. The syntactic errors in (1), (2) and (3) are the result of the interferences between the mother tongue and English. Vietnamese learners of English tend to apply the grammar rules of their mother tongue to build English negative sentences. Let's consider some negative sentences in English and Vietnamese in the following situation:

(7) A: *So you are still living there?* [21, p.249]

B: **No, I am not.** *I have rented a flat near the bank.*

(8) A: *Would you care for a drink?* [21, p.249]

B: **No, thanks.**

“No, I am not” in B7 is a denial of an assertiveness.

In (8), B rejects to A's offer. So, “No” in B11 is a rejection. Also, in Vietnamese:

(9) *Trên trời không một vì sao.* [33, p.303]

(10) **Không phải** anh này. [33, p.303]

Three Vietnamese examples above use negative makers “không” to form negation but the difference is that

(9) is a descriptive negation

(10) is a denial

There is a wide variety of the syntactic features and the uses of negative sentences both in English and Vietnamese which may cause difficulty for learners in communication. However, at times there has been no study concerning the direct relation between form and the use of negation in English and Vietnamese so far. Thus, it is justified to carry out a study on this topic “An investigation into the syntactic features and the uses of English and Vietnamese negative sentences in some contexts” to benefit the learners in their communication.

1.2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study chiefly deals with syntactic features and the uses of English and Vietnamese negative sentences that have a formal maker of negation called “nuclear negatives”[7, p.180] as **not, no, nobody/no one, nothing, nowhere, none, never, neither/nor**. They are **không, chẳng, chưa, chả** or the coordinators **không phải / không hề / không bao giờ, chẳng phải / chẳng hề / chẳng bao giờ, chưa phải / chưa hề/ chưa bao giờ, chả phải / chả hề / chả bao giờ**.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the syntactic features of NSs in E and V?
2. What are the uses of NSs in E and V?
3. What are the similarities and differences of NSs in E and V in terms of the syntactic features and the uses?

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study includes five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1, INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2, LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 3, METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Chapter 4, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Chapter 5, CONCLUSION

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Jespersen (1917) in “*Negation in English and Other Languages*” lays the broad foundation for studies of negation later. He provides general tendencies of negation, strengthened and weakened negatives, indirect and incomplete negation, special and nexal negation, the meaning of negation. Tottie (1991) proposes a classification of the uses of negatives in both oral and written language in “*Negation in English Speech and Writing*”. Pagano (1990) concerns about the pragmatic perspective of “*Negatives in Written Text*”. Horn, Laurence, R. and Yasuhiko Kato (2000) in “*Negation and Polarity- Syntactic and Semantic Perspectives*” involve in the syntactic features and scope of negation. Mazzon in “*A History of English Negation*” presents an extensive study of negation that combines both synchronic and diachronic complementary analyses.

Vietnamese grammarians and linguists have investigated into negation from difference perspectives but mainly focus on traditional, structural or logical perspectives such as Diệp Quang Ban (2004, 2006), Đỗ Thị Kim Liên (1999), Mai Ngọc Chu, Vũ Đức Nghiệu, Hoàng Trọng Phiến (1980), Nguyễn Đức Dân (1996). In addition, negative sentences in English and Vietnamese have also been investigated on a contrastive analysis by Nguyen Quang in his master thesis. Especially, Tran Van Phuoc in his doctor thesis “*Phân tích đối chiếu câu phủ định*

tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trên bình diện cấu trúc ngữ nghĩa” systemized the syntactic-semantic features both in English and Vietnamese declarative sentences as well as analyzed the differences and similarities of syntactic-semantic features in the two languages.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Negation

Negation is contradicting the meaning or part of the meaning of a sentence. [25, p.354]. The chief use of a negative sentence being to contradict and to point a contrast. When a word is negated, it often becomes the antonym of other word, or there is a natural tendency to place the negative first immediately before the particular word to be negated (generally the verb). [15, p.4-5]

2.2.2. Negative sentences

2.2.2.1. Some concepts of negative sentences

In English, negative sentence is defined as a sentence, which uses a negative word like **not**, **never**, **nothing**, etc. to indicate the absence or opposite of something, or to say that something is not the case. [6, p.26].

In Vietnamese, negative sentence is a sentence that contains a negative word as **không**, **chẳng**, **chớ**, **đừng**, **chưa** distributed before a verb or an adjective. [40, p.51]

2.2.2.2. Classification of negative words

Negative words are divided into two types. Nuclear negative words are **no**, **not**, and the contracted form **-n't**, **nobody/no-one**, **nothing**, **nowhere**, **none**, **never**, **neither/nor**. Implied or semi-negative words are such words as **hardly**, **scarcely**, **rarely**, **few**, **a little**, etc.

2.2.2.3. Some ways of expressing negative ideas

According to Downing, A. and Philip Lock, a sentence may be negated by using the so-called nuclear negatives or the implied or semi-negative forms. In Vietnamese, a sentence may be negated by various

ways through different negative words. According to Diep Quang Ban (2004, 256-257), there are four main negative groups:

- a. Không, chẳng, chưa, chả
- b. Không phải, chẳng phải, chưa phải, chả phải.
- c. không, chẳng, chưa, chả + predicate + đâu
- d. Negative coordinators: (không) có... đâu, nào có... đâu, làm gì có, có phải... đâu, đâu (có) phải...etc.

2.2.2.4. Classification of negative sentences

a. Classification of negative sentences according to communicative functions

negative statements, negative questions and negative commands

b. Classifications of negative sentences according to syntactic and semantic features

real negative sentences, unreal negative sentences or weakened negatives and provisional negative sentences

c. Classification of negative sentences according to pragmatic features

descriptive negation, denial negation, rejection and metalinguistic negation

2.2.2.5. Scope and focus of negation

2.2.3. Speech acts

2.2.4. Context

2.2.4.1. Some related concepts

2.2.4.2. Features of context

2.2.4.3. The roles of context in interpretation

A context can support a range of meanings.

2.2.5. Speech events

2.2.5.1. Theory of speech events

2.2.5.2. Speech events relating to the uses of negative sentences

Chapter 3

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims at an investigation into the syntactic features and the uses of negative sentences in English and Vietnamese in some contexts.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research and comparative analysis

3.3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

1148 English negative sentences and 1162 negative sentences in Vietnamese are taken from English and Vietnamese short stories and novels. Data collected is qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF E AND V NSs

4.1.1. Syntactic features of negative statements

4.1.1.1. Negative sentences with negator NOT

a. Predicate negation with NOT

Structure E1: Predicate negation with NOT in English

S (N/Pro./THERE) + AUX + NOT/N'T + V + O/C/A + (YET)

a.1. Structures of modal negation

The structure of modal negation in English is:

Structure E1.1: Modal negation in English

S + MV + NOT + V (B.INF.) + O/C/A

(1) I *can't* see them.

[48, p.34]

a.2. Structures of Non-modal negation

o Negation with BE

Structure E1.2: Negation with BE in English

S + BE + NOT + (V) + C/A

Negation of lexical **be** can be followed by a noun, a pronoun, an adjective or an adverb, which functions as complement of the sentence.

(2) *Maybe the Yankees **aren't** there yet.* [50, p.44]

When **be** is an auxiliary, it is added to other verbs to make progressive and passive.

(3) *He **isn't** lying to me.* [48, p.26]

A negative sentence whose the subject is **there** and the verb is **be** describes the non- existence of something. For example:

(4) ***There aren't** any trains.* [51, p.38]

o Negation with HAVE

- *Negation with lexical HAVE*

Structure E1.3. Negation with lexical HAVE in English

S + DO/ DOES /DID + NOT + HAVE + O (AmE)
S + HAS NOT/ HAVE NOT (GOT) + O (BrE)

Sentences with lexical **have** can be negated by two ways. The first way is to use auxiliary **do, does** or **did** as operator and insert **not** after it (*American English*). **Does** is used for the third singular person at the present, **do** used for the rest and **did** used for all persons in the past. The second way is to insert **not** directly after **have** or **has** and informally **got** is often added (*British English*). **Has** is used for the third singular and **have** for the rest.

(5) *I keep trying, but I **don't have** any photos with me.* [52, p.88]

- *Negation with auxiliary HAVE*

Structure E1.4. Negation with auxiliary HAVE in English

S + HAVE/HAS + NOT + V (PP)+ O/A (the present perfect)
S + HAD + NOT + V (PP)+ O/A (the past perfect)
S + HAVE/HAS+ NOT +BEEN+ V-ING + O/A (the present perfect continuous)
S + HAD+ NOT +BEEN+ V-ING + O/A (the past perfect continuous)
S + WILL HAVE + NOT + V (PP)+ O/A (the future perfect)
S + WILL HAVE + NOT + BEEN + V-ING + O/A (the future perfect continuous)

(6) *The dog **hasn't come** home since this morning.* [48, p.8]

o Negation with DO

Structure E1.5. Negation with auxiliary DO in English

S + DO/DOES/DID + NOT + V(B. INF.) + O/A

(7) *I **don't** really know.* [48, p.46]

In Vietnamese, there aren't such words that function as auxiliaries as in English. There are not as much various words of modal as in English, too. The most typical words for expressing the modality meaning are the combinations of **không, chẳng, chưa, chả** with **thể, cần, dám.**

Structure VI. Predicate negation in Vietnamese

CN + (ĐÃ) + **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA** + VT + TrN/BN
(SẼ/SẴP) **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA** **THỂ/CẦN/DÁM**
KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA **CÓ/CÒN**
KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA **BAO GIỜ**
KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA **LÀ**
KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA **PHẢI (LÀ)**

Structure VI.1. Modal negation in Vietnamese

CN + **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA** + **THỂ/CẦN/DÁM** + ĐT + TN/TrN

(8) *Anh **không thể** cầm nổi cái phông được nữa.* [56, p. 225]

Structure VI.2. Negation with không/chẳng/chả/chưa (là /phải là) in V

CN + **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA (LÀ /PHẢI LÀ)** + VT + BN

(9) *Không, chắc chắn là anh ấy **không buồn** mà chỉ càng mừng cho em.* [54, p.148]

(10) *Tôi **không phải là** người trong gia đình này.* [57, p. 81]

In English, negation of lexical **have** indicates the absence of possession. To describe the non- existence of something, English uses *the structure E.4.12* with the subject is **there**. In Vietnamese, however, the equivalent words **không có, chẳng có, chả có, chưa có** convey two

different meanings, the absence of possession and non- existence of something.

Structure V1.3. Negation with “*không/chẳng/chả/chưa có*” in V

CN+ **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA CÓ** + TN
CN (Ồ) + **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA CÓ** + DT

(11) Em **chả có** chút kinh nghiệm gì mà lại làm **tổ trưởng** kỹ thuật thì rồi đến nát công việc của hợp tác xã chị ạ. [54, p.147]

In the structure 4.2.3.b, subject is absent, **chả có** stands at the beginning of the sentence and is followed by a noun to denote the non-existence of something.

(12) **Chẳng có** căn cứ gì, **chẳng có** lý lẽ nào rõ rệt. [54, p.129]

Negation of Vietnamese predicate also includes negative sentences in which negative word stands before a verb in the predicate, called structure of verb negation in Vietnamese.

Structure V1.4. Verb negation in Vietnamese

CN + **KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA (PHẢI/HỀ)** + DT + TN/TrN

(13) Cây lược ngà ấy **chưa** chải được mái tóc của con, nhưng nó như gỡ rối phần nào tâm trạng của anh. [55, p.200]

o Structures of non-assertive forms

Structure E1.6. Negation with NOT...ANY in English

S + AUX + **NOT** + V + ANY+ NP/BODY/ONE/THING/WHERE

(14) And she's got Ashley and I haven't got **anybody**. [51, p.17]

= And she's got Ashley and I have got **nobody**.

Structure E1.6. Negative structure with NOT...EITHER in English

S + AUX + **NOT** + V + O/A, **EITHER**

(15) I **won't** report you, **either**. [52, p.70]

= **Neither** will I report you.

Structure E1.7. Negation with NOT...EVER in English

S + AUX + **NOT** + **EVER** + V + O/A

(16) He **doesn't ever** go out. [29, p.97]

= He **never** goes out.

b. Subject negation with NOT

Structure E2. Subject negation with NOT in English

NOT+ S + AUX + V + O/A

(17) **Not** everyone enjoys skin-diving. [7, p.182]

Structure V2. Subject negation in Vietnamese

KHÔNG/CHẲNG/CHẢ/CHƯA (PHẢI/CÓ) + DT/Al/GÌ + VN + (ĐÂU)

This is also the main structures of denial negation in Vietnamese.

(18) **Không ai** được vào phòng bệnh nhân. [57, p.308]

c. Clausal negation with NOT

Structure E3.1. Clausal negation with ADV+NOT in English

S + AUX + V. - **ADV** + **NOT**

Not can stand after some adverbs such as **certainly, of course, probably**, etc. to deny the whole previous statement.

(19) Could you ever love me? – **Certainly not!** [51, p.32]

Structure V3.1. Clausal negation with **chẳng chắc/tất nhiên/có lẽ (là)**

không in Vietnamese

CN + VN . – TrN (LÀ) **KHÔNG (CÓ/RỒI)!**

(20) Sếp thử tìm trong máy mình ra sao?

Chắc chắn là không rồi? [41, p.77]

Some verbs or verb phrases combine with **not** to negate a clause. These kinds of verb are **hope, believe, suppose, or be afraid of**, etc.

Structure E3.2. Clausal negation with V+NOT in English

S + V + (S+P) + **NOT**

(21) Are you going to see Alan again? - I **believe not**. [28, p.347]

Vietnamese statement has the equivalent structure below

Structure V3.2. Clausal negation with **hy vọng, nghĩ, tin là/ thì không** in Vietnamese

CN + ĐT + LÀ/THÌ +(CN+VN)+ KHÔNG

(22) *Hôm nay chắc có nhiều người đến thăm Sếp đây?*
- Minh nghĩ là không. [41, p.76]

4.1.1.2. Negative sentences with negator **No (or NO- negation)**

a. Subject negation with **NO**

Structure E4. Subject negation with **NO** in English

NO + N/BODY/ ONE/THING + AUX + V + O/C/A
NONE (OF +N)
NEITHER (OF +N)

(23) *Nobody could find him there.* [48, p.12]

Vietnamese equivalent structure :Structure V2.

b. Clausal negation with **NO**

Structure E5. Clausal negation with **NO** in English

S + AUX + V . -NO!/NOTHING!/NOBODY!/NOWHERE!/NONE!
S + AUX + V . NEITHER + AUX + S!

(24) *Have you seen this thief?’ – No, replied the old lady.* [48, p.:36]

Vietnamese equivalent structure

Structure V4. Clausal negation in Vietnamese

KHÔNG (CN + VN)!

(25) *Chàng gai người, khẽ hỏi: "Cô lấy làm tiếc vì việc đó lắm sao?" - "Không," nàng thờ dãi.* [57, p.78]

c. Object negation with **NO**

Structure E6. Object negation with **NO** in English

S + AUX + V + NO + N/BODY/THING + (A)
NONE (OF+N/NP)
NEITHER (OF+ N/NP)

(26) *But Scarlett cried no tears.* [50, p.54]

Structures of object negation with **no (one, thing, etc.)** and structures sentential negation with **not + any (one, thing, etc.)** are used in different styles. Object negation with **no** is formal and often used in writing. Sentential negation with **not + any** is informal and more used in speaking.

(27) *“She’s got Ashley and I haven’t got anybody.* [50, p.17]

English people are in favour of using object negation with negator **no**. Vietnamese, however, tend to use sentential negation rather than constituent negation with object negation. Because of this difference between the two languages, Vietnamese learners of English often face many difficulty in using or translating from an English negative sentence into Vietnamese one or vice versa. For example, Vietnamese people do not say as one in (83)

(28) *Tôi đọc không phải quyển sách này.* [32, p.265]

But it is often said like (84)

(29) *Tôi không đọc quyển sách này.* [32, p.264]

Therefore the Vietnamese equivalent structure for object negation in English is the structure of predicate negation in Vietnamese in Structure VI. Examples:

(30) *Chàng chẳng có gì để phàn nàn.* [55, p.70]

d.. Complement negation with **NO**

Structure E7. Complement negation with **NO** in English

S + AUX + BE + NO +N/GERUND/ADJ + (A)
NOBODY/NOTHING
NONE (OF+N)
NEITHER (OF+N)/....NOR

(31) *There was nobody in the room except the old man.* [48, p.16]

Vietnamese equivalent structure is structure VI.2

e.. Adverbial negation with **NO**

Structure E8. Adverbial negation with **NO** in English

S + AUX + BE /V + NOWHERE/ NO LONGER/NO MORE (a)
S + NO LONGER + AUX + V + O/C/A (b)

(32) Then he was **no longer** a confederate... [51, p.30]

Structure V5. Adverbial negation in Vietnamese

KHÔNG/CHẴNG + CÓ + NƠI NÀO/CHỖ NÀO + ĐỂ + ĐT	(a)
CN + KHÔNG/CHẴNG CÒN (LÀ) + BN + NỮA	(b)

(33) Nhưng chị Sáu và cháu Thu **không còn** ở làng nữa. [55, p.201]

4.1.1.3. Negation with negator Never

Structure E9. Negation with NEVER in English

S + BE/AUX + NEVER + V + O/C/A	(a)
NEVER + AUX + S + V + O/C/A	(b)

Negation with **never** is total negation. In this structure, **never** stands after auxiliary verbs (including **be**) and before ordinary verbs.

(34) Jim was **never late**. [51, p.134]

When **never** is put at the beginning of the sentence, the inversion between the auxiliary and the subject is done (Structure E9.b)

(35) **Never** in the dog's experience **had** it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. [49, p.129]

Negative sentences with **never** can be replaced by negative sentences with **not... ever** and vice versa.

(36) I **don't** want to see you **ever** again! [50, p.45]

= I **never** want to see you again.

Structure V6. Negation with **không/chẳng/chưa bao giờ** in English

CN + KHÔNG/CHẴNG/CHƯA BAO GIỜ + ĐT + BN/TRN	(a)
KHÔNG/CHẴNG/CHƯA BAO GIỜ + CN + VN	(b)

(37) Chàng ngạc nhiên, **chưa bao giờ** ông hành động như vậy. [7, p.88]

4.1.2. Syntactic features of negative questions

4.1.1.1. Negative Yes-No questions

a. Yes-No questions with NOT

Structure E10. Yes-No questions with NOT in English

AUX + N'T + S + V + O/C/A?	(informal)
AUX + S + NOT + V + O/C/A?	(formal)

(38) **Isn't** that enough? [51, p.12]

b. Yes-No questions with NO combinations

Structure E11. Yes-No questions with NO combinations in English

AUX + S + V + NOBODY/NO ONE/NOTHING/NOWHERE + C/A?

(39) Was there **no one** else near? [48, p.42]

Structure V7. Negative questions in Vietnamese

CN + KHÔNG/CHẴNG/CHẢ/CHƯA + ĐT + BN/TN + TTT?
--

(40) Em sinh con ra mà lại **không** hiểu tâm lý nó **ư?** [54, p.137]

In English, negative questions are answered in the same way as positive questions:

(41) **If you can drive** **If you can't drive** [28, p.355]

Can you drive? Yes, I can. (agreement) No, I can't. (disagreement)

Can't you drive? Yes, I can. (disagreement) No, I can't. (agreement)

English people use **yes** to express disagreement and **no** to express agreement in reply to an English negative question. In Vietnamese people, however, tend to reply a negative sentence basing on the fact rather than the form of the question. Thus, to express agreement to a Vietnamese negative question, **vâng, ừa**, ect. (equivalent with **yes** in English) are used.

(42) **Má không kêu em hỏi chị Hai?** - **Ừa.** [58, p.404]

4.1.1.2. Negative Wh- questions

Structure E12. Negative Wh- questions in English

WH- + AUX + N'T + S + V + O/C/A?	(informal)
WH- + AUX + S + NOT + V + O/C/A?	(formal)

Question words are such words as **who, what, why, when, where, which, how, how long/how often**, etc. stand at the beginning of the sentence.

(43) **Why don't** we tell the police? [48, p.46]

(44) Why **have** you **not** booked your holiday yet? [28, p.345]

Structure V8. Negative questions with *sao/làm sao/vì sao... không* in Vietnamese

TĐH + CN + KHÔNG/CHƯA/CHẴNG + ĐT + TN/BN/Tr?

In this structure, the questions words (TĐH) are put at the beginning of the sentence, followed by the subject and the predicate.

(45) *Ba con, sao con không nhận?* [55, p. 198]

4.1.1.3. Question tags

Structure E13. Tag questions in English

S + AUX + V , AUX + N'T +S?
S + AUX + NOT + V, AUX + S?

Question tags are used after affirmative and negative sentences, but not after questions. If the statement is affirmative, the tag is negative and vice versa. In the tags, there is an inversion between the auxiliary and the subject.

(46) *You are the officer of the workhouse, aren't you?* [48, p.40]

Structure V9. Negative questions with *đã/có/là...không/chưa/phải không* in Vietnamese

CN + (ĐÃ/CÓ/LÀ) + (ĐT) + TN/BN + KHÔNG/CHƯA/PHẢI KHÔNG?

(47) *Đồng chí là người miền Nam phải không?* [58, p.338]

4.1.1.5. Negative declarative questions

Structure E14. Negative declarative questions in English

S (Pro/N+ AUX + (NOT)+ V + (rising tone) ?

(48) *And you didn't sell him anything?* [48, p.58]

Structure V10. Negative declarative questions in Vietnamese

CN + VN?

(49) *Anh vẫn không quên được em gái tôi?* [57, p.92]

4.1.3. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF NEGATIVE COMMANDS

Structure E15. Negative commands in English

(PLEASE)+ DON'T + S (YOU) + V(B. INF.)

(50) *Don't you worry.* [51, p.15]

Negative commands in Vietnamese are expressed by using such words as **không/đừng/chớ** before verbs.

Structure V11. Negative commands in Vietnamese

(XIN)+ (CN) + KHÔNG/ĐỪNG/CHỚ + ĐT + (BN)

(51) *Anh tuyệt đối không tin nhá!* [57, p.308]

4.1.1.4. The frequency of English and Vietnamese negative sentences in the total of samples taken

Negative statements take the highest percentage (84.93%), negative commands take the second place with 7.87% and negative questions take the third 7.20%. **Not**-negation takes the most percentage with 43.81%. In which, the sentential negation of **not** is the great number (40.79%) while the constituent negation of **not** is less (3.02%). Denying verbs (also called auxiliary negation) is the most percentage in

4.2. THE USES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE NEGATIVE SENTENCES IN SOME CONTEXTS

4.2.1. Description

Negative sentences are used to describe the absence or non-existence of things, events or phenomena or their features in the context of describing something.

(52) *Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men did not realize this when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were.* [51, p.1]

(53) *Đêm không tối, cũng không sáng, nền trời tràn qua nhiều lớp mây mỏng, rải rác một vài chùm sao.* [55, p.201]

Example (52) describes the absence of appearance beauty of "Scarlett O'Hara". Example (53) describes the scenery at night.

(54) *There aren't any trains.* [51, p.38]

(55) *Dưới bến chẳng có một chiếc xuồng, ghe nào qua lại.* [56, p.234]

Example (54) describes the non-existence of things, they are “trains”. In the example (55) “*xuông*” and “*ghe*” do not exist.

English and Vietnamese descriptive negative sentences are used in describing features of things, events or phenomena.

(56) *But the police don't know where he lives.* [48, p.23]

(57) *Hầu hết người làng đều không biết người chỉ huy.* [56, p.235]

4.2.2. Denial

Negative sentences are also used to deny an idea of addressees or addressors in their process of thinking. Denial negative sentences are used in the context of arguing, discussing or expressing the disagreement of something. The samples below illustrate the different types described above. Examples (128) and (129) from [44] illustrate the difference between what [30] defines as explicit and implicit denials respectively:

(58) *"I suppose you just don't care if you lose your leg, do you?". "It's my leg.". "It certainly isn't your leg!" Nurse Cramer retorted. "That leg belongs to the U.S. government"* [44,p.300]

(59) *Catch-22 required that each censored letter bear the censoring officer's name. Most letters he didn't read at all.* [44, p.300]

By explicit denial, Tottie refers to negative statements that deny a proposition which has been explicitly stated in the discourse. Nurse Cramer's answer (*It certainly isn't your leg!*) in sample (58) is an illustration of such use, since it denies the previous utterance, stated explicitly in the discourse.

An implicit denial will deny an implicit proposition, an assumption or an expectation held by the speakers, or it might deny an entirely hypothetical assumption entertained by neither of them. Sample (59) illustrates this fact; the negative proposition “*Most letters he didn't read at all*” does not deny an explicit previous utterance but, rather, it denies an assumption the narrator/author imagines the reader might hold.

Some explicit denials are expressed by means of the pragmatic signal **no** in English or **không** in Vietnamese with the explanation coded in the form of a statement, affirmative or negative, as illustrated by samples (60) and (61) below:

(60) *"You really want to go into combat?"* [44, p.321]

"Oh, no--you misunderstand me ..."

(61) *Tên địch chỉ mặt tên phản bội hỏi cháu:* [56, p.225]

Mày có biết tên này không?

Cháu gái lắc đầu: Không!

In sample (60), the pragmatic signal **no** denies the proposition “*You really want to go into combat*” of the preceding utterance. In sample (61), the pragmatic signal **không** denied the previous sentence “*Mày có biết tên này không?*”

Tottie further states that implicit denials can deny the presuppositions of a preceding proposition, as illustrated by samples

(62) *'Rain coming,' she thought at first. Then she went to the window. 'No, not rain, guns! And from the south!* [51, p.55]

In sample (62), the noun “rain” is also introduced as a presupposition. And it is denied by the following “*No, not rain.*”

In Vietnamese, we also find the same phenomenon as in English, from the sample below

(63) *Đôi mắt bất động. Dáng nằm nghiêng bất động. Bàn tay đỡ tờ tập chí bất động. Không. Người ta không đọc như vậy.* [53, p.312]

In sample (63), all phrases “*Đôi mắt bất động. Dáng nằm nghiêng bất động. Bàn tay đỡ tờ tập chí bất động*” are mentioned as presupposed information, which is subsequently denied by the following statement “*Không. Người ta không đọc như vậy.*”

4.2.3. Rejection

(64) *A: Then finally she got what she wanted.* [21, p.249]

B: Well, I wouldn't say that. She never wanted to break with him. Things just happened that way.

B's denial of A's assumption (the woman in question wanted to end her relationship with her boyfriend) has a strong ideational component: B wants to correct A's view of a fact; the truth or correctness of the fact is more relevant than the interpersonal element in the conversation. However, if the conversation went like this:

(65) A: *So the party is at 9. Shall I bring something to eat or ...?*

B: *No, thanks. Don't worry. We'll have pizza.* [21, p.249]

In saying "No", B is assuming a role in the conversation; he is providing an answer to A's offer (interpersonal function). There is certainly an ideational component (A does not need to bring anything to the party), but the interactive function (a rejection) is the one that predominates. Thus, taking into account the predominant language component in a particular instance of language use, rather than the notion of volition, we can posit in agreement with Tottie that rejections and denials constitute two different categories of negative use.

4.2.4. Confirming information

4.2.5. Making affirmative statements

4.2.6. Directives

4.2.6.1. Requests

4.2.6.2. Suggestions

4.2.6.3. Orders

4.2.6.4. Advice

4.2.6.5. Encouragement

4.2.7. Expressives

4.2.6.1. Surprise

4.2.6.2. Sympathy

4.2.6.3. Expressing opinion

4.2.8. The frequency of E and V NSs in terms of uses

The statistics in the table above show that in Vietnamese literary works, descriptive negative sentences take the top place with the percentage of 66.83% in English and 85.37% in Vietnamese. Denial

negative sentences take the second place with 18.09% and 8.78% in English and Vietnamese respectively. Giving directives such as requests, suggestions, orders, advice, or encouragement is in the third range in English with 9.38%. Negative questions used to confirm information when the speakers are doubtful or uncertain take the fourth place with nearly the same percentage in English (3.52%) and Vietnamese (3.53%). However, negative sentences with the uses of rejecting someone's offer or expressing the speaker's feeling are less found both in English and Vietnamese.

4.3. THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF E AND V NSs IN TERMS OF THE SFs AND THE USES

4.3.1. Similarities and differences of SFs in E and V NSs

4.3.1.1. Negative statements

a. *Similarities:*

Negative statements both in English and Vietnamese appear more than questions and commands in literary works. Sentential negation is higher than constituent negation both in the two languages, in English (58.66%), in Vietnamese (85.8%). Some negative structures in English have the equivalent ones in Vietnamese, summarized in the table below

English structures	Vietnamese equivalents
4.1.S+AUX+NOT+V+O/C/A	4.2. CN + TPĐ + VT
4.1.1. S+ MV + NOT + V+ O/C/A	4.2.1.CN+TPĐ+TTT+ĐT+TN/TrN
4.1.2. S + BE +NOT+(V)+ O/C/A	4.2.2.CN+TPĐ+(LÀ/PHẢI LÀ)+DT/TT
4.1.3. S+AUX+NOT+HAVE+O	4.2.3. CN+TPĐ+ CÓ+ TN
4.3. NOT+N+V+)+ O/C/A	4.4. TPĐ +DT/AI/GÌ + VN
4.17. NO+ N/INF.Pro +V	4.18. TPĐ +DT/AI/GÌ + VN
4.19. NO!NOTHING!	4.20. KHÔNG!
4.23. S+ AUX +NO LONGER+V	4.25. CN+TPĐ+ CÒN+VT+NỮA
4.26. S+BE/AUX +NEVER+V	4.27. CN+TPĐ+BAO GIỜ+ VT

WH- + AUX+S+V ? (PLEASE) DON'T + (S) + V	TĐH + CN + TPĐ + VT? (XIN) + (CN) + TPĐ + VT.
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b. Differences: Some negative structures in English do not have the equivalent ones in Vietnamese. English statements are in favour of object negation and it is quite natural while in Vietnamese, it is not. There is the inversion between the subject and auxiliary when put **never** at the beginning. In Vietnamese, no inversion when placing **không/chẳng/chưa bao giờ** before the subject.

4.3.1.2. Negative questions

a. Similarities:

Wh-questions and negative declarative questions are used more among four types of question in the two languages. Yes-No questions are less used. The percentage is 1.66% and 0.69% in English and Vietnamese respectively.

b. Differences:

In English literary works, negative questions occur more than in Vietnamese, taking 7.20%. - Vietnamese negative questions takes 4.13% in the total of samples selected.

4.3.1.3. Negative commands

a. Similarities:

Both in English, "PLEASE" is inserted at the beginning or at the end to make the command more polite or softer. The same is in Vietnamese negative sentences. "XIN" is often placed at the beginning before the subject and added by some particles at the end to soften the commands.

b. Differences:

English negative commands have the tendency to use the structure without subject (7.62%). The negative commands with subject are used more in Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, negative commands also convey the position or the hierarchy of the speakers toward the listeners expressed through the particles at the end.

(66) *Cháu chịu đừng được, bác đừng ngại ạ...* [55, p.208]

4.3.2. The similarities and differences of E and V NSs in terms of the uses

4.3.2.1. Similarities:

Among samples taken from the literary works, descriptive negative sentences are found most in the both languages, taking the highest percentage in the total samples taken.

4.3.2.2. Differences:

When translating English negative sentences with **not** or **no** into Vietnamese, some more words as verbs or particles (*nhé, u, nữa, ...*) are used in Vietnamese sentences to make its meaning clearer. Take some following samples for illustrations

(67) *Yossarian tried to help him. "Don't be a dope" he had counselled Clevinger.* [44, p.295]

This sentence performs an illocutionary act, it is an advice. In Vietnamese, the word "**khuyên**" is added to make the advice like this "*Anh ta **khuyên** Clevinger đừng thần thờ nữa*".

(68) *You-you don't love me?', she said.* [51, p.:33]

*(Cô ta ngạc nhiên hỏi "Anh-anh **không** yêu tôi **u?**")*

In this sentence, **u** may be added in Vietnamese equivalent.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

The study has investigated into the syntactic features of **not**-negation and **no**-negation in English and Vietnamese negative sentences containing negative words **không, chẳng, chả, chưa**. In terms of pragmatics, several uses of negative sentences with nuclear negative words are studied in some contexts in the literary works. Then, the similarities and differences of syntax and uses between the two

languages are pointed out. Lastly, some implications for English teaching and learning are also given out.

5.2. A BRIEF RE-STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS

Syntactically, we have found 15 negative structures with nuclear negators **no** and **not** in English sentences under three types, English negative statements, negative questions and negative commands. In Vietnamese, 11 negative structures with **không**, **chẳng**, **chả**, **chưa** have been found. In both English and Vietnamese, sentential negation is the most typical one. Questions and commands are less used both in the two languages. English and Vietnamese have some equivalent negative structures as predicate negation, subject negation, clausal negation and adverb negation. However, the negative structures with object negation with **no** and complement negation with **no** in English have no equivalent ones in Vietnamese. Therefore, when translating from an English negative sentence with object or complement negation with **no** into Vietnamese one, negative structures with predicate negation in Vietnamese are used. For example:

(69) *She said **nothing**, only stared at him.* [50, p.15]

This sentence in Vietnamese must be interpreted as “*Cô không nói gì, chỉ nhìn hẩn ta mà thôi.*”

In English, constituent negation as object negation or complement negation with **no** is favourably used. In Vietnamese, however, sentential negation is replaced in this case.

Pragmatically, we have found that instances of negative sentences can be used for different purposes in communication and can be clarified depending on the contexts. The chief main use of English and Vietnamese negative sentences is to describe the absence or non-existence of something. In fact, description is used more in English as well as Vietnamese with the highest percentage. Other uses as denial, rejection, directives, expressive are less used in literary works.

5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

The study has some implication as follow. First, the various structures clarified in chapter four will be a useful reference for English learners who have difficulties mentioned above. In addition, teacher of English can teach Vietnamese learners of English how to transfer from affirmative sentences into negative ones and vice versa; or else, to transfer from negative statements into negative questions and vice versa. Second, in translating, to avoid the mistakes resulting from the transfer of the mother tongue when interpreting from Vietnamese negative sentences into English ones, English learners should be well aware of the similarities and differences between the two languages, about the equivalent and non-equivalent negative structures. Last, negative sentences are used for various purposes. They are not only used to describe or deny something, events or phenomena. Furthermore, they are used to perform other illocutionary meanings as suggesting, requesting, giving advice, etc. Be aware of this, we will get the better aims in communication.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher has not taken the samples in conversations or in newspapers or magazines Therefore, the occurrence of negative structures in the thesis is understood in the writing style, not in speech in reality. Moreover, the use of negative sentences is a rather new concept that has just been discussed a little recently. There has not been a study that covers the English and Vietnamese negative sentences in terms of pragmatics or uses perfectly so far. Therefore, just some main uses of negative sentences are studied and given out.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Some further problems that we should continue to concentrate on could be enumerated as follows:

-Semi or implied negation may be a question for further studies.

-The scope and the focus of negation may be a topic for future researchers to carry out.

-Negative utterances