

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

NGUYỄN VŨ PHONG VÂN

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO
NEGATIVE SENTENCES
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE:
A WORD GRAMMAR
PERSPECTIVE**

**Field Study : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Code : 60.22.15**

**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(A SUMMARY)**

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Supervisor: TRAN QUANG HAI, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE

While studying English, learners may experience differences in the ways of expressing ideas between these two languages. One of the most difficult aspects they may encounter is how to use negatives correctly. At the early stages, learners have to find out the devices which were used to express negation. Besides the usual negators like “no, not” in English or “không, chẳng” in Vietnamese, there’s still many words denoting negative meaning are used. Sometimes, learners make up sentences like what they always do in their mother tongue; that way, they obviously make mistakes.

Besides, sometimes negative sentences are used not for the purpose of negating but for a variety of purposes which may really challenge learners.

There are still more cases which Vietnamese learners may confuse in using English negatives. To help learners avoid these confusions, this study is carried on.

Moreover, beside traditional theory, linguists have investigated on many theories to help learners study a foreign language. In order to introduce the new theory to apply in the process of studying a foreign language, Word Grammar theory is applied throughout this study.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims

This study aims to:

- Investigate the negative sentences in English and Vietnamese, Word Grammar perspective.

1.2.2 Objectives

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives are set:

- Analyzing the structures of sentences containing negative words extracting from Vietnamese and English works.
- Identifying negatives devices in English and in Vietnamese.
- Determining the aims of using negative sentences
- Finding out the functions of negative sentences in context.
- Identifying the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in using negative sentences.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the negative devices in English and Vietnamese sentences?
2. What are the similarities and differences about structures and functions between English and Vietnamese negative sentences?
3. What are the advantages of applying the theory of Word Grammar in analyzing sentences?
4. How to help learners overcome the difficulties in using English negative sentences?

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

We clearly realize that there are many aspects of using negative sentences. However, in the limitation of this thesis, we will not go far into all of these aspects. What we want to do is to focus on negative sentences containing negative words in English and Vietnamese.

1.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study – An investigation into negative sentences in English and Vietnamese: A word grammar perspective - is hoped to

contribute to the process of learning and teaching English when we have to deal with ways to use negative sentences, especially to help the Vietnamese learners or speakers of English have a chance to learn to observe the nature of negatives, and more importantly, to avoid misunderstandings when communicate with native speakers.

1.6. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1, Introduction

Chapter 2, Literature Review

Chapter 3, Method and Procedure

Chapter 4, Discussion of Findings

Chapter 5, Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

& THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Gabriella Mazzon (2004) in “*A History of English Negation*” presents an extensive study of negation that combines both synchronic and diachronic complementary analyses. Laurence R. Horn and Yasuhiko Kato (2000) in “*Negation and Polarity-Syntactic and Semantic Perspectives*” deal with the syntactic features and scope of negation. Gunnel Tottie (1991) in “*Negation English Speech and Writing*” classifies the uses of negatives in both oral and written language. Adriana Pagano (1990) in “*Negatives in Written Text*” investigates on the pragmatic perspective of negatives in written text. Otto 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 weaken negatives,

indirect and incomplete negation, special and nexal negation, the meaning of negation.

Traditional, structural and logical perspective of negation are mainly investigated by grammarians and linguists, such as Diệp Quang Ban (2002) in “*Ngữ pháp Tiếng Việt*”, Mai Ngọc Chừ, Võ Đức Nghiệu, Hoàng Trọng Phiến (2000) in “*Cơ sở ngôn ngữ học và Tiếng Việt*”, Hồ Lê (1993) in “*Cú pháp Tiếng Việt*”. Nguyễn Quang has investigated negatives on a contrastive analysis in English and Vietnamese in his master thesis. Also, 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*” analyzed the differences and similarities of syntactic-semantic features of negative sentences in the two languages.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Word Grammar (WG)

2.2.1.1 What is WG?

Richard Hudson, who has studied and developed WG stated that WG is a general theory of language. Most of the work to date has dealt with syntax, but there has also been serious work in semantics and some more tentative explorations of morphology, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics and language processing. Although the roots of WG lie firmly in linguistics, and more specifically in grammar, it can also be seen as a contribution to cognitive psychology; in terms of a widely used classification of linguistics theories, it is a branch of cognitive linguistics (Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1987; 1990; Taylor 1989).

WG semantic structures are based on named links ('dependencies') in a network, just as in many other theories such as Frame Semantics and Cognitive Grammar.

As a theory of **morphological** structures, WG belongs to the family of theories which respect the syntactic integrity of the word under slogans such as 'morphology-free syntax', 'Word-and-Paradigm morphology', 'lexical integrity'.

WG **sociolinguistic** structures are based on links between words and particular types of person or situation. Most theories do not recognize sociolinguistic structures as part of language.

2.2.1.2 Word

'Word' is the basic unit of language, not only in Word Grammar but also in virtually every other theory.

The word has a word-form, the largest unit relevant to **segmental phonology** (as opposed to intonation

The word is the smallest unit relevant to **meaning**.

The word is the optimum unit for relating meaning to segmental phonology, being the largest unit for phonology and the smallest for meaning.

The word is the unit of classification into 'languages'.

The word is the unit for syntax.

2.2.1.3 The main tenets of Word Grammar

- a) WG is *lexicalist*
- b) WG is *wholist*
- c) WG is *trans-constructionist*
- d) WG is *poly-constructionist*
- e) WG is *relationist*

f) WG is *mono-stratalist*

g) WG is *cognitivist* and *prototypist*

h) WG is *implementationist*

2.2.1.4 Default inheritance

'Default inheritance' is the name for the basic logical operation which makes generalizations possible in WG. Default inheritance is closely related to the idea of prototypes, since the default characteristics for a concept are those of its (proto) typical members.

2.2.1.5 Isa

'Isa' is the name of a very important and very general relationship. Its name is based on the ordinary English 'is a', as in *She is a student*. This sentence means that she is an example or member of the general category 'student'. This is what the 'isa' relationship means. It is the relationship between the concepts in an inheritance hierarchy.

2.2.1.6 Dependency

A dependency is the relationship between a word and one of its dependents - for example, if *big* depends on *book*, the relationship between them is a dependency. So 'dependency' is a kind of relationship, in contrast with 'dependent', which is the word that has this relationship.

2.2.1.7 Adjacency Principle

In WG, Hudson shows a preliminary version of the Adjacency Principle as follows: A word must be adjacent to any other word, which is its head. More precisely: Adjacency that it defined that A is adjacent to B provided that every word between A

and B is a subordinate of B. The Adjacency Principle rules out great with difficulty because great is not adjacent to its head, difficulty, being separated from the letter by a word, with, which is not a subordinate of difficulty.

2.2.2 Some notions are used in the research paper

2.2.2.1 Negation

According to Longman dictionaries of language teaching and applied linguistics, negation is contradicting the meaning or part of the meaning of a sentence. [1, p.354]

Jefferson states that the chief use of a negative sentence being to contradict and to point a contrast. [20, p.4]

2.2.2.2 Negative sentences.

A negative sentence is a linguistic means used to express negation, a basic category of human thinking, which is naturally studied in logic and philosophy. [10, p.26]

According to Richard Hudson [8, p.288], negative verb is one whose referent has the quantity zero - in other words, one which doesn't refer to any actual situation, because it's not true.

Diep Quang Ban (2004) states that negative sentences and positive sentences are distinguished by the semantic features and expressing forms in the view of traditional grammar.

2.2.2.3 Negative Word and Classification

According to Downing and Philip Lock, there are two types of negative words: nuclear negative words and semi-negative words. Nuclear negative words are explicitly negative words. Semi-negative words are such words that are not negative in appearance but in meaning.

2.2.2.4 Double Negative

In English, a double negative is the nonstandard usage of two negatives used in the same sentence so that they cancel each other and create a positive.

In Vietnamese, double negative is used widely and conveys both positive meaning and negative meaning, as in “Cấm không đổ rác ở đây” and in “Không bao giờ không tán thành”.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.3 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.5 DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE

3.6 DATA CLASSIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 THE STATISTICS ON THE FREQUENCY OF USE OF NEGATIVE SENTENCES TYPES WITHIN THE SAMPLES COLLECTED

According to English samples collected, negative statements take the highest rate of use (81.6%) while other types are much less used. Among negative statements, predicate negation takes the top place (49.2%) and subject negation takes the second place (26.13%)

whereas object negation and complement negation account for only 3.6% and 4.13% respectively.

Negative commands account for 9.33 % and take the second range. The third place is for negative questions with 8.93%. In this type, yes/no questions take the most percentage with 3.6%. Wh-questions take the second place with 3.07% and with 2.53%, tag questions take the least percentage. Only one sample (relatively 0.13%) is found in the type of double negative.

Among Vietnamese samples, negative statements account for the most percentage (83%). Within this type, predicate negation takes the top place with 51.06 % and subject negation takes the second place with 23.6%. Only 3.47 % of this type belongs to complement negation. There is no sample of object complement.

With 10.67%, questions are in the second range with 4.13% of Yes/No questions, 4.67% of Wh-questions and only 1.87% of Tag questions.

Commands rank third with 5.07% in total.

Double negative with 1.35% takes the least percentage.

4.2 THE STRUCTURES OF NEGATIVE SENTENCES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.2.1 The Structure of Negative Sentences in English and Vietnamese

To summarize the structures of English and Vietnamese sentences, we just choose some examples which are analyzed as the representatives of its type.

4.2.1.1 The Structure of Negative Statements

a. Predicate negation

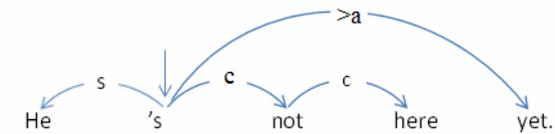


Figure 4.1: Predicate negation of ENS analyzed in WG

Figure above shows how predicate negation works in an English auxiliary sentence:

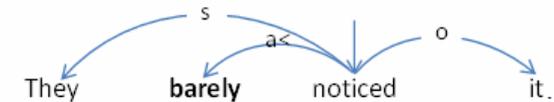


Figure 4.4: Predicate negation of ENS analyzed in WG

Figure above shows how predicate negation works in English non-auxiliary sentence

Although there is no auxiliary in Vietnamese, there are some cases of the same structure in Vietnamese negative statement (VNS) which is demonstrated in the sample below:

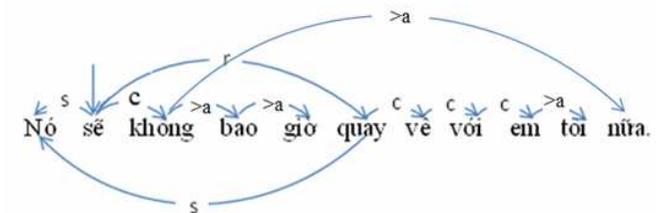


Figure 4.5: Predicate negation of VNS analyzed in WG

b. Subject negation

The following samples demonstrate how subject negation works in English as well as in Vietnamese:

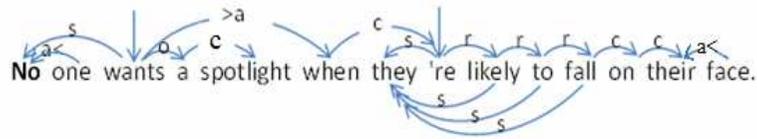


Figure 4.8: Subject negation of ENS analyzed in WG

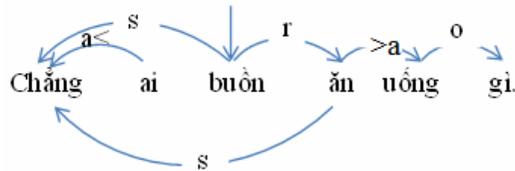


Figure 4.13: Subject negation of VNS analyzed in WG

c. Object negation

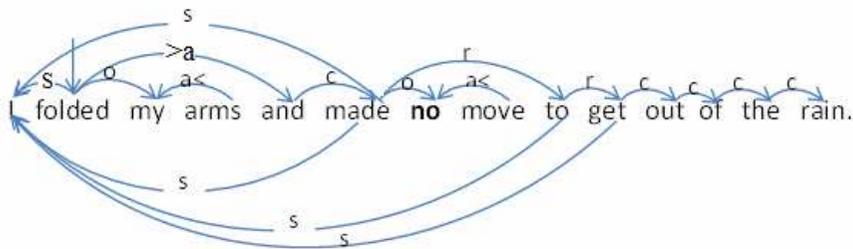


Figure 4.14: Object negation of ENS analyzed in WG

This type of negation is not popular in Vietnamese. In the process of conducting this material, we have not found any sample of this type of negation.

d. Complement negation



Figure 4.16: Complement negation of ENS analyzed in WG

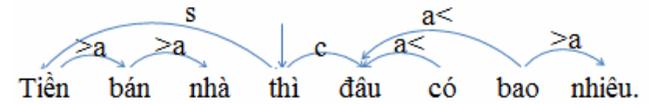


Figure 4.18: Complement negation of VNS analyzed in WG

The two samples above illustrate how complement negation in ENS and in Vietnamese works.

4.2.1.2 The Structure of Negative Questions

a. Yes/ No questions

These are two examples of Yes/ No negative question in English and Vietnamese.

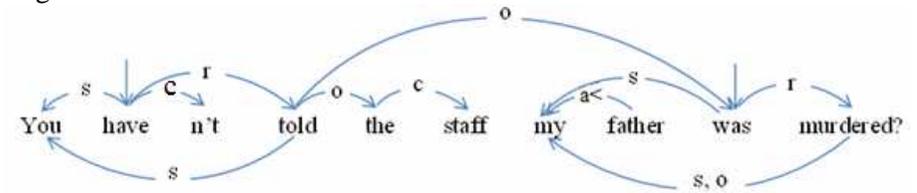


Figure 4.19: English negative Yes/No question analyzed in WG

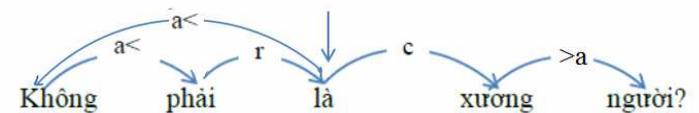


Figure 4.21: Vietnamese negative Yes/No question analyzed in WG

b. Wh-questions

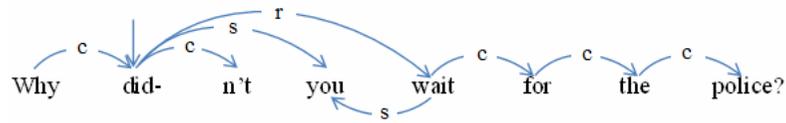


Figure 4.23: English negative Wh- question analyzed in WG

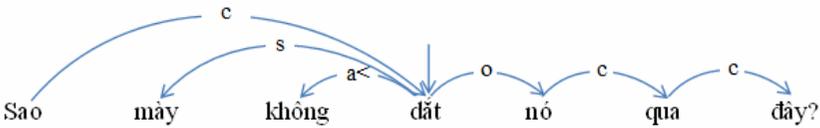


Figure 4.25: Vietnamese negative Wh- question analyzed in WG

c. Tag questions

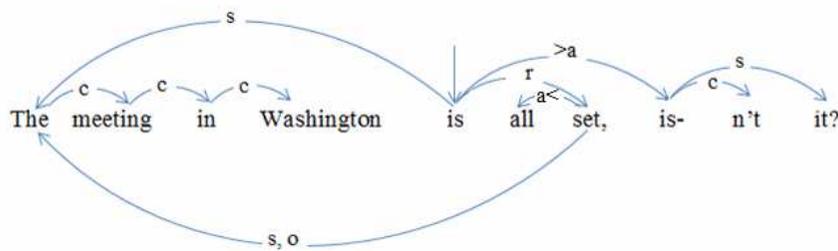


Figure 4.27: English negative tag questions analyzed in WG

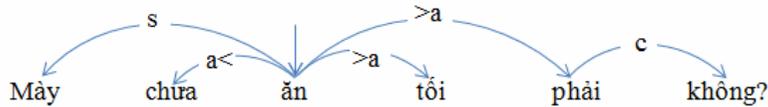


Figure 4.28: Vietnamese negative tag questions analyzed in WG

4.2.1.3 The Structure of Negative Commands



Figure 4.31: English negative command analyzed in WG

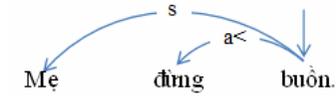


Figure 4.33: Vietnamese negative command analyzed in WG

However, in Vietnamese, there is the redundancy in using negative words. Consider the sentence below:

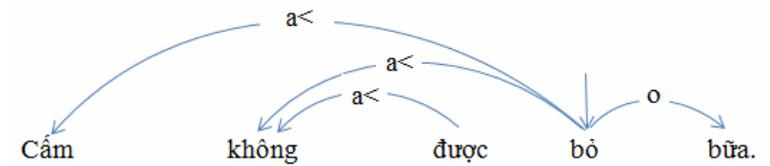


Figure 4.35: English negative command analyzed in WG

4.2.1.4 The Structure of Double Negative

Sometimes, more than one negator is used in a negative sentence. While this type of sentence is widely used in Vietnamese, it is really rare in English. The sample below illustrates double negative in English:

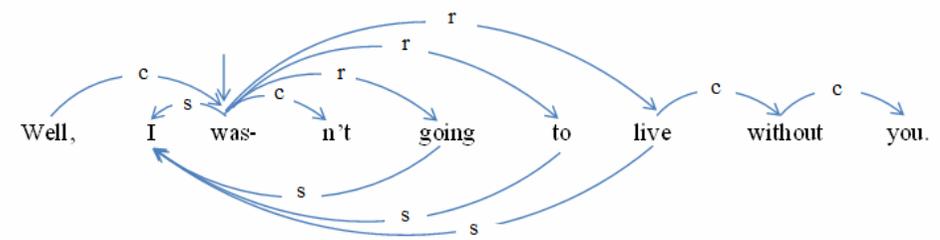


Figure 4.36: English double negative sentence analyzed in WG

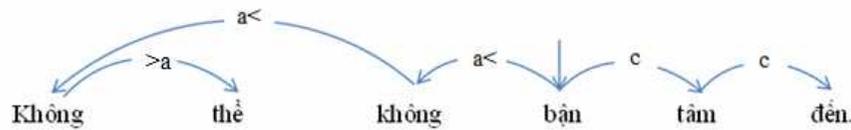


Figure 4.37: Vietnamese double negative sentence analyzed in WG

4.3 THE AIMS OF USING NEGATIVE SENTENCES IN ENGLISH AND IN VIETNAMESE

4.3.1 Negating

4.3.2 Affirming

4.3.3 Confirming

4.3.4 Giving directives

4.4 THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE NEGATIVE SENTENCES IN TERMS OF STRUCTURES AND USES

Firstly, both English and Vietnamese negative sentences are used for some certain communication functions, such as description, denial rejection, asking or confirming information, making affirmatives statements or giving directives.

Among negative sentences, both English and Vietnamese ones, the negative statements take the most percentage than the other types, accounting for 81.6% in English and 83% in Vietnamese. Predicate negation takes the highest range in comparison with subject negation, object negation, complement negation, which is 49.2% in English and 51.06% in Vietnamese. However, while object negation in English is used to make the statement stronger, it is odd when using in Vietnamese. In addition, to form a negative statement in

English, a negative adverb is added after and auxiliary. However, there is no auxiliary in Vietnamese. Furthermore, when negative adverbs are put at the beginning, inversion often occurs in English, which never appears in Vietnamese.

In the type of negative questions, yes/no questions rank first in English with 3.6% while Wh-questions make the most percentage (4.67%) in Vietnamese. Tag questions make the second rank in English while they are the least use in Vietnamese. Due to the fact that there are no auxiliaries in Vietnamese negative sentences, the structure of tag questions in English is different from that in Vietnamese. In English, the tag depends not only on the subject of the statement but also on its tense.

With negative commands, English negative sentences have the tendency to use the structure without subject while the subjects are used more in Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, there is the redundancy in using negative words in this type as illustrated in the sample “Cấm không được bỏ bữa” (See figure 4.2.3.5).

Both English and Vietnamese negative sentences have the type of double negative. However, the use of two negators in English cannot be in the same constituents. If so, the sentence is considered grammatically wrong. In Vietnamese, the appearance of double negative both in the different and in the same constituents is normal. The negators have relations to each other in one constituent to make the sentence become affirmative. Double negative in Vietnamese is used mostly to strongly affirm the fact.

4.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDYING NEGATIVE SENTENCES

4.5.1 Negative word functioning as the complement

As analyzed above, the negative words can be the complement of the auxiliaries in the sentence. While the main verb is always the center of the sentence, the auxiliary (Au) modifies the main verb (V) and shares the subject (S) with it. Therefore, the auxiliary must precede the main verb. Then, the negative device (N) functions as the complement of the auxiliary; thus, it must be between the auxiliary and the main verb. The form can be generalized as follow:

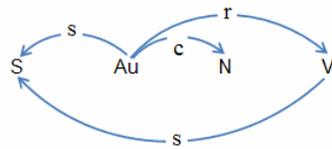


Figure 4.42: Generalized form of negator as a verb complement

Although in Vietnamese, there is no definition of Vietnamese auxiliary, but as mentioned above, there are still some words which have the function the same as auxiliary in English. Therefore, the figure above can be used in case of Vietnamese negator.

4.5.2 Negator as the pre-dependent in a phrase

4.5.2.1 Negator as pre-dependent in a verb phrase

Not as in auxiliary sentence, in non-auxiliary sentence, negative word directly modifies the verb. It stands before the verb in the sentence. This type can be illustrated as follow:

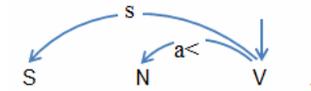


Figure 4.42: Generalized form of negator as a pre-dependent of a verb

In Vietnamese negative sentence, there is the same structure as the generalized one above, as the example below:

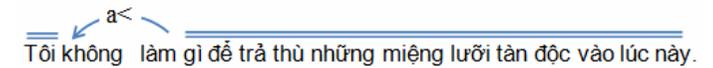


Figure 4.43: VNS with negator as a pre-dependent of a verb

In the case of some verbs like “be”, “have”, “need”, “dare”, etc. which can be both the auxiliaries and the main verbs. Therefore, depending on their functions, the negative words can be either the complement of the auxiliary or the complement of the main verb. These cases can be illustrated by the two samples below:

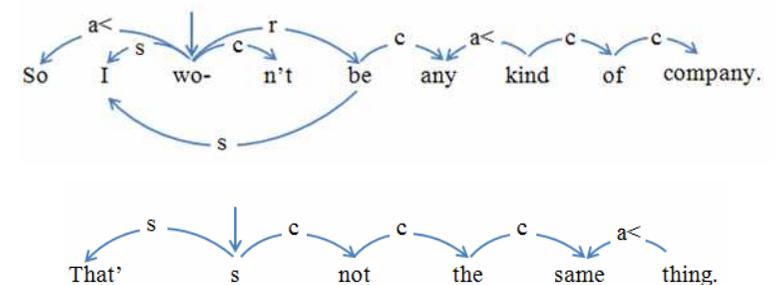


Figure 4.44: Functions of negator in ENS with the verb “be”

4.5.2.2 Negator as pre-dependent in a noun phrase

Consider three examples below:

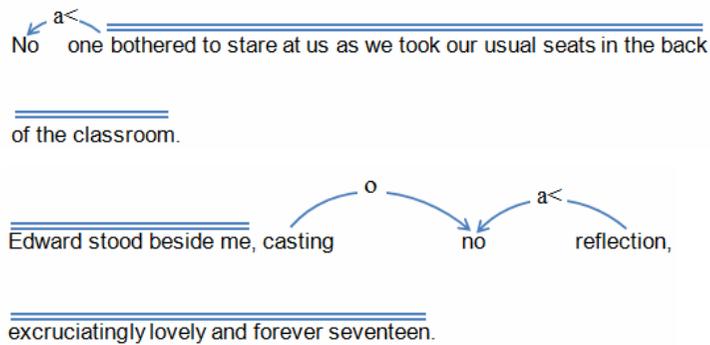


Figure 4.45: ENS with negator as a pre-dependent in a noun phrase

In the first and second example, noun phrases function as the subject and object in the sentence, negator “no” precedes and functions as an adjective to modify the head noun.

Negator as the pre-dependent in a noun phrase can also be found in Vietnamese negative sentences. The following example can illustrate more this type.

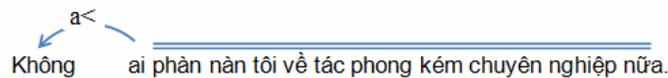


Figure 4.46: VNS with negator as a pre-dependent in a noun phrase

4.5.3 Negative word functioning as the post-dependent in a sentence

Consider these following examples:

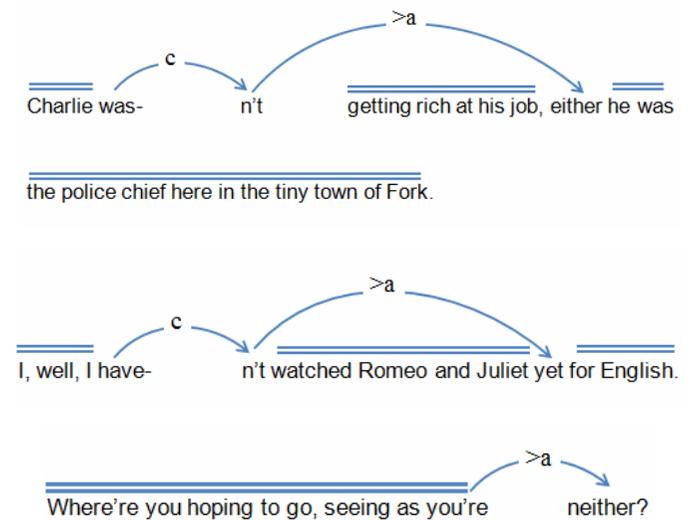


Figure 4.47: ENS with negator as a post-dependent

The figure above shows how post-dependent works in English negative sentences. In the first example, negator “not” normally functions as the complement of the verb “be”. “Either” modifies negator “not”.

The second example with the use of post-dependent “yet” to modify “not” shows us another word to modify “not”. If the combination of “not” and “either” means that something does also not happen, the combination of “not” and “yet” indicates that something does still not happen.

The first two examples show us how the negative devices modify other devices in negative sentences. In the third example, negative device “neither” functioning as post-dependent in affirmative sentence to negate the sentence.

In Vietnamese, negator can also function as post-dependent in a sentence. The two samples below illustrate more about it:

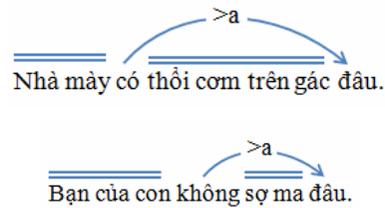


Figure 4.48: VNS with negator as a post-dependent

The two examples above are typical examples of Vietnamese negators functioning as post-dependent in the sentence. In the sentence “Nhà máy có thối cơm trên gác đầu”, negator “đầu” modifies the verb “có” and makes the sentence become negative sentence. In the sentence “Bạn của con không sợ ma đâu”, “đâu” is used to modify negator “không”. It is used to emphasize negative word and make the sentence more natural.

In Vietnamese negative sentence, sometimes negative words are modified by another word to strengthen the meaning of the word it modifies. Also, while English negators are often the single words, Vietnamese negators sometimes consist of a phrase, in which many words modify the main negators. These samples below can illustrate more this idea:

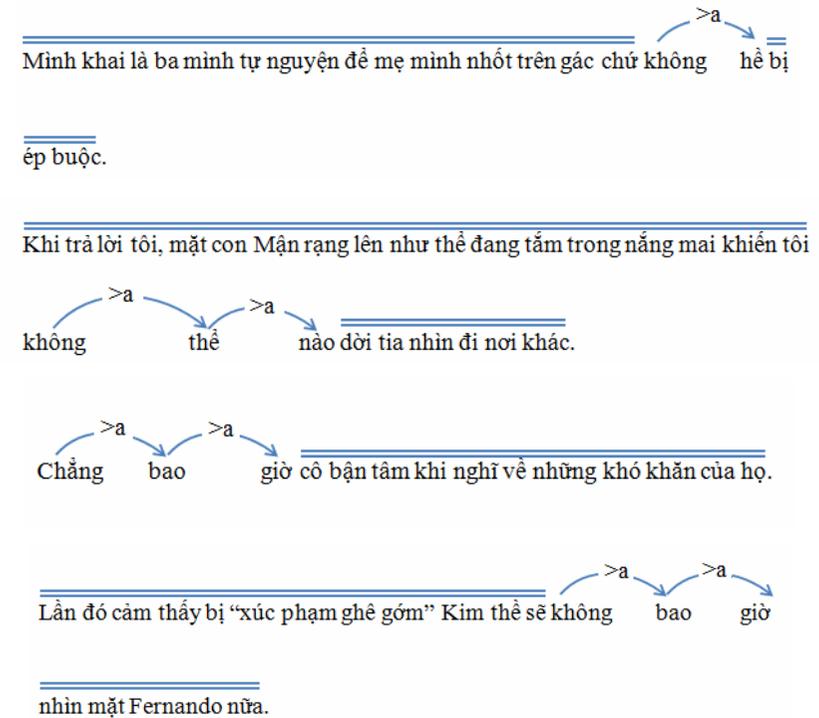
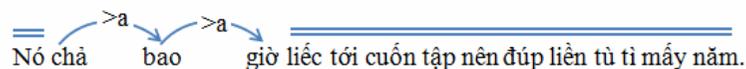


Figure 4.49: VNS with negator modified by some post-dependent

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

5.1 A SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

The paper with the title: “*An investigation into negative sentences in English and Vietnamese: A word grammar perspective*”, has investigated into the structures and the uses of English and Vietnamese negative sentences. The similarities and differences of these units are also determined. Some suggestions are

also provided after analyzing all samples. Finally, some implications for language learning and teaching are also presented.

5.2 A BRIEF RE-STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS

In English and Vietnamese negative sentences, the most frequent type is predicate negation. Object negation is used popularly in English why it is rarely (or probably never) used in Vietnamese. Vietnamese negative command has the redundancy of negation why English negative command does not. Double negative is common used in Vietnamese while it is grammatically wrong in English.

Negative sentences are used to negate a statement, to create affirmative statements, to confirm information or to give directives.

By classifying negative sentences by their negator's position in the sentence, the negator can be the complement in the sentence as well as in a noun phrase. Next, negators can be the pre-dependent in the sentence. Also, in the noun phrase, when negators directly modify the noun, it precede the noun and become the noun's pre-dependent. Finally, sometimes, negators function as the post-dependent in the sentence.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.3.1 Suggestion for language learning

Learners should make motivation in studying WG. Motivation decides where we channel activation. The need of motivation is self-evident, but the theory of WG not only helps to explain why it so, but also why motivation may be in short supplies.

Both of these processes require extra activation, so they both presuppose some degree of motivation.

5.3.2 Suggestion for language teaching

Teachers should understand how learners retrieve just one word. Also, teachers should know why learners have speech errors.

Next, we turn to other ways of using language, starting with listening. When listening to another speaker, learners retrieve words by working in the opposite direction. Learners hear a sequence of sounds, and have to work out which word we have just heard.

It is very significant to make the language itself interesting because it guarantees that attention will be on the words and their network connections.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the research only focuses on the small measure in context of the theory WG in order to analyze the small aspect: English and Vietnamese negative sentences, mainly in the syntactic properties. Secondly, the samples are not taken from wide range of sources; therefore, the conclusions cannot avoid subjectivity.

5.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further study can be conducted about semi or implied negative sentences. Moreover, the investigation on the similarities and differences in using negative sentences over each period of time is an interesting topic. In addition, there is still lack of study conducted in the light of WG; further investigation into analyzing other types of sentences is practical.