

Negation and Mood: In Their Reference to Symmetry and Asymmetry

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Abstract: This paper aims at studying negation in relation to mood. More specifically it aims to unveil symmetric and asymmetric manifestation of negation/affirmation in the frame of different moods.

The thorough study of the illustrated material makes it possible to bring to light the interwoven relation reigning in the kingdom of negation and various modal mappings of verbs in English. An endeavour is made to prove that a verbal form in any paradigm of mood entirely governs the implicit and explicit expression of negation. Hence, the battle lines between a negative form and its semantics is drawn by a grammatical mood.

The findings of our analysis show that asymmetrical relations are of common occurrence in oblique moods, where the verbs are used in the past tense. In this case the gap between the form and meaning of the verbal item is greater.

Key words: mood, negation, symmetry, asymmetry, objectivity, subjectivity

1. Introduction

It's well-acknowledged that negation has been studied from various perspectives and in various languages. However, it still remains one of the most fascinating linguistic items leading to new touches. It's like a huge mysterious veiled book turning the leaves of which we appear in a new world full of linguistic items shrouded in mystery. As mentioned above, this paper focuses on the implicit and explicit expression of negation in the paradigm of different moods.

Our starting-point assumption is that the verbal use of any mood predetermines whether the relation holding between statement and negation is symmetrical or asymmetrical. More specifically our research question is twofold:

- Which are the common and distinctive features of negation and mood?
- How are the symmetrical and asymmetrical relations of positive and negative statements expressed in different moods?

The problem of English mood is extremely intricate. There seems to be no universally acceptable solution to its essence at present: Here are some of them:

The category of mood expresses the character of connection between the process denoted by the verb and the actual reality (M. Deutchbein, n.d.).

Moods are the changes in the form of the verb to show the various ways in which the action or state is thought of by the speaker (M. Y. Blokh, 2000; L. G. Koshevaya, 1982; H. Sweet, G. O. Curme, 1977).

We accept the second view on the mood as in the first one though the scholars establish a direct close connection between the reality and the language, the great role of the speaker/writer is neglected.

As for the number of moods it varies between two extremes: three moods (indicative, subjunctive, imperative) accepted by most grammarians (L. G. Koshevaya, 1982; O. Jespersen, 1924) and sixteen moods proposed by M. Deutchbein. Between these two extremes there are intermediate view points such as prof. Smirnitski, who proposed a system of six moods (indicative, imperative, subjunctive I, subjunctive II, conditional and suppositional). We support the three-membered opposition with its categorical constituents: Indicative – Imperative – Subjunctive. Our further analysis is performed on the material of these three moods.

2. Eliminating Negation from Mood

In the next step, our research should provide valuable insights into the nature of negation and mood. It's noteworthy in our general overview to outline the common and distinctive traits of **mood and negation**.

Language as a phenomenon originated by man is not only concentrated around man but preceeds from the latter. Egocentrism in language therefore is a natural and rightful phenomenon which has nothing in common with its social manifestation in psychology and society (L. G. Koshevaya, 1982, p. 136).

As a general category of thought expressing the speaker's attitude to objective reality *mood* naturally is far from being identical to the outer world with which it is related by the person who perceives and appreciates it. In his choice he is restricted by two factors: 1. by the world of his subjective perception (such as feelings, emotions, evaluations, volitions, etc.); 2. by the established language (in this case English) inventory that is objective for every speaker /writer because he can't overstep its limits (take the negation that is monorepresented in English and birepresented in Russian, Armenian). Thus, notwithstanding a considerable variety of linguistic structures the speaker is restricted in his or her choice by the range of forms objectively existing in English because they are not determined by the speaker's will. The foundation of the given category as objective psychologically linguistic phenomenon lies just in realizing an act of linking language as a relatively static phenomenon with the speech act as a dynamic phenomenon. Concrete employment of language structure in the person's speech activity permits modality (in the narrower sense mood) to be viewed as a psychologically linguistic phenomenon. Anyway mood is neither extralinguistic nor intralinguistic. Mood can be said to be a specific bond to permit the most exact identification of the objective world with language. The reverberation of objective reality in language is performed by a process embracing two stages: the first stage may be termed as *logical*; reflecting an object of reality by its language identification and the second stage is branded as *evaluative* when the appraisal of the object blurs with the psychological one. At the reflective level mood operates as a secondary phenomenon, while at the second level it takes a primary position. In this respect a logical question arises whether mood is an objective or subjective phenomenon. A system of forms through which an object gets fixed on the normative language level is an objective linguistic phenomenon, because English has such a system typical of its structural type. However, the selection of these elements into speech act is individual (subjective) and is termed "modality". In this respect mood is enframed as *double faceted*.

As for negation, it is neither purely objective, nor purely subjective. From this angle it comes closer to mood. As an objective category the manifestation of negation is connected with general laws of language. As a subjective category negation implies speaker's various attitudes to the contents of the utterance (such as affirmation, negation, assurance, volition, etc.). Here we can state that mood and negation are both two-faceted categories with common

semantics — evaluation of reality.

Reverting to their distinctive traits the following can be said.

- these two categories are of independent status having their own grammatical meaning and relying on different grammatical oppositions;
- they have different morphological enframing;
- the manifestation of mood and negation is many-sided: they find various lexical morphological, syntactical manifestations even in the frame of one language.

After giving the general overview on these two categories, it should be apt to outline the item functioning as a link bridging negation a mood. This function performs a verb. Here the verb becomes the axis around which our analysis runs.

3. Objectivity and Subjectivity in Reference to Moods

As stated above, our ultimate objective is to reveal the relationship between the mood and negation. Thereby, further insights into this correlation is gained in the light of “symmetric/asymmetric” theory. It’s a well-known fact that the form and function of negative statements in ordinary language are far from simple and transparent. Our methodological approach is based on the theoretical framework proposed by us in the article “Affirmation-Negation: New Perspective” where negation is examined in the purported presuppositional symmetry and asymmetry. According to the earliest extant version of this doctrine, negatives presuppose affirmation (Aristotele’s conception) and not vice versa.

In symmetrical concept affirmation and negation are defined as units of the same level (negatives necessarily presuppose affirmation and affirmation presupposes negation), while in asymmetrical doctrine they belong to different levels (negation presupposes affirmation and not vice versa). We reject the strong symmetrical and asymmetrical position and take an intermediate position. We should make a distinct line between this doctrine in **logic and language**. In logic gains symmetrical theory — negation presupposes affirmation and affirmation presupposes negation. In language, on the contrary, mainly works asymmetrical theory: negation presupposes affirmation but not vice versa (p. 914).

3.1 The Indicative Mood

Proceeding from this principle we review the evidence concerning the relationship between verbal forms in different temporal zones and negation. Our starting point is **indicative** as the unmarked member of the opposition on which the *category of mood lies*.

It has been widely documented that the meaning of *activity* is the essence of Indicative mood (G. O. Curme, 1977; L. G. Koshevaya, 1982).

- I lived with uncle and aunt on the outskirts of a little Kentish town by the sea (W. Somerset Maugham, 1930, p. 34).
- It rains here every day.

The evidence above suggests that the verb in Present Indefinite (*rains*) in contrast to the present forms inherits less objectivity.

Expressing a factitive statement of events indicative naturally fixes them not as directly given but after they have gone through the speaker’s perception. Hence in indicative we have maximum objectivity and minimum subjectivity.

Besides representing something as factive, indicative points to something as in close relation with reality:

- “If we play three or four times a week during your Easter holiday you won’t need to be afraid to play with anybody” (W. Somerset Maugham, 1930, p. 5).
- “I’ll give you a lesson if you like”, said Drifffield in his good-humoured way. Come on (W. Somerset Maugham, 1930, p. 52).

As for symmetry it runs in factivity statements while in statements close to reality work both symmetrical and asymmetrical relations.

3.2 The Imperative Mood

Further passing on to the **Imperative mood** which expresses the speaker’s command, request or warning brings it closer to indicative as they both express future actions. The difference between the future in indicative and imperative remains tangible; the future tense of the Imperative mood renders an action which is determined by the doer, whereas the future of Indicative mood on the contrary expresses an imminent categoriality the realization of which is determined not by the addressee who must fulfill the command but by the speaker who states a certain action to be completed in future. On the other hand, the Imperative mood in the sphere of the future tense is opposed to the Subjunctive mood. Like in the Subjunctive mood the meaning of future in imperative is conventional and can’t be determined by the speaker alone. The Imperative mood, coming closer to the sphere of subjunctiveness in expressing futurity, differs from the Subjunctive mood by the meaning of closed problematicity (desire and obligation). The following examples illustrate how asymmetry (disharmony between verbal form and meaning) works in sentences with Imperative mood.

Desdemonna: Kill me tomorrow. Let me live tonight (W. Shakespeare, Othello).

A request to postpone the murder is equal to the negative incentive (not to do now).

Thus the logical knot comes out as an encoded negation, functioning as a request. The correlation may be of opposite character:

Lady Macbeth: Go carry them (the daggers) and smear the sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth: I’ll go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done (W. Shakespeare, Macbeth).

The logical knot of this stimulus is of positive nature, whereas the logical knot of the reaction (*I’m afraid to think what I have done*) is negative as it expresses refusal from execution.

3.3 Subjunctive Mood

The following forms of the Subjunctive Mood are distinguished:

1. Present Subjunctive, rendering, problematic action (*If the weather be fine we shall go there*). Present Subjunctive being a relic of ancient phases of development of English is as a rule substituted by Present Indicative. Hence its application is limited mainly to the solemn and official style (L. G. Koshevaya, 1982, p. 143). **2. Past Subjunctive** expressing unreal but theoretically possible and performable action (*If the weather was /were fine we should go there*). This Subjunctive belongs to the past only visually due to the forms homonymous to the corresponding forms of Past Indicative. **3. Perfect Subjunctive** rendering the action altogether imperformable (*If the weather had been fine we should have gone there*). As we can judge the difference of the three types of Subjunctive lies in their forms, in their morphological patterning, while the meaning of verbal forms is neglected. We think of this from the opposite standpoint. As far as the meaning of Past Subjunctive is concerned it refers the action to the present or future and this is directly opposite to the past. Consequently this form is not past but Present Subjunctive. Analogically Perfect Subjunctive has no direct connection with perfectness correlating the

action done before a certain moment or with another certain past action. It was so named because of its grammatical homonymy of forms. Since according to its meaning Past Subjunctive refers the action to the Past tenses it allows this form to be considered as Past Subjunctive. Gliding the action along the real and unreal line we can state that Present Subjunctive reflects real action whereas Past Subjunctive indicates unreal action. Hence Subjunctive Mood is based on the opposition “reality–non-reality”, where the strong member of the opposition is “non-reality”. Reality is embodied in Present Subjunctive and non – reality is framed by Past Subjunctive. As Past Subjunctive embraces Past and Perfect forms it is necessary to distinguish two forms in Past Subjunctive:

Past Subjunctive I (was/were) and *Past Subjunctive II (had been)*. These two forms belonging to the same past temporal zone imply different meanings; though the indicated verbal meaning of Past Subjunctive one relates to the sphere of non- real ones it still preserves a chance of its realization as a certain bit of the problematicity.

“I think it should be very pleased if I could persuade you to come down for two or three days and stay with me (W. S. Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*, p. 39).

“Who was that you were with this morning?” I asked him as he sat down.

“Oh, that was Edward Driffield. I didn’t introduce him. I wasn’t sure if your uncle would wish you to know him”.

“I think it would be most undesirable,” said my uncle (W. S. Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*, p. 37).

Correspondingly non-reality referring to Past Subjunctive II renders non-fulfilment of an action.

If I had put it into words at all I think I should have said: she looks as straight as a die.” (W. S. Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*, p. 71).

“If it had been my own property, I should have put it promptly in the kitchen stove” (W. S. Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*, p. 79).

Reality in Present Subjunctive may be presented as volition or necessity: *If the weather be fine we shall go there*. Where the infinitive *be* characteristic of modality indicates the reference of an action to a definite phase following the temporal zone of time. It implies action following the present moment. The speaker isn’t sure in his weather predictions but he is confirmed in his decision of going there.

As for the insights the symmetry/asymmetry asymmetrical relations flow both in Present Subjunctive and Past Subjunctive. In latter the condensation of asymmetry is greater than in the former one. It refers to the Perfect form.

4. Conclusion

Perception of world and its reverberation in any language is a two-faced phenomenon conveying psychological and linguistic factors.

As a many faceted system of reflection mood (modality) in its manifestation is connected with general laws of language.

Objectivity and subjectivity have different proportions in moods: in Indicative mood there is maximum objectivity and minimum subjectivity. In Subjunctive moods subjectivity prevails over objectivity.

Non-reality directly relates to the temporal manifestation of verbal forms.

The idea of symmetry/asymmetry contains seeds of explanation of why there is a great asymmetry in oblique

moods. Asymmetrical relations gain much occurrence in Subjunctive and Imperative moods.

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