

ON THE CATEGORY OF NEGATION IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE

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“Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer is a very important example of Medieval English Literature. So, it is a good basis for studying the category of negation of this period. Based on this fact, the purpose of our research is to study the main aspects of expressing negation in Medieval English Literature. For this, it seems reasonable to analyse negative affixes, negative pronouns, negative adverbs, mononegation and polynegation on the syntactic level, as the main ways of expressing the category of negation in this period.

The research is conducted in the framework of the theory of historical grammar represented by works of R. Berndt, V. Bondarenko, V. Mykhaylenko, L. Kedova, T. Rastorgueva. I. Trutiak, L. Verba.

The category of negation at the lexical level is expressed by means of affixes that have explicative and implicative components in their meaning. Authentic affixes preserve the semantic meaning of the word they etymologically derive from, giving the word they join to a special shade of negation. The main source of the enrichment of the negative affixes paradigm and their new meaning are affixes borrowed from other languages.

The paradigm of the affixes with negative implications in Old English included: *wan-*, *un-*, *mis-*, *for-*, *wip-*, *gain-*, *-læs*. For example: *wansælig*, *miscwepan*, *fordeman*, *wipsegen*. In Early Middle English, the paradigm of the affixes with negative implication included: *un-*, *mis-*, *for-*, *-læs*. For example: *unwit*, *misdeed*, *forwerpen*, *skillæs*.

Affixes in general preserve the semantics and compatibility of the lexical items they derived from, but some changes can be observed too. It stands to reason, that semantic shades of negation correspond with the main lexical meaning of the adjective negative.

In the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer the following examples of negative affixes have been found:

(1) *And Frensch she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Statford at the Bowe –*

For Frensch of Paris was to hire unknowe (Chaucer 2005: 73). – Here *unknowe* the affix – *un-* with semantic component of absence or lack of quality is used.

(2) *Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
is likned til a fish that is waterlees –*

This is to sayn, a monk out of his cloistre (Chaucer 2005: 74). – In this case *waterlees* the affix – *lees-* with a semantic component of absence or lack of quality is used too. The same thing can be said about *recchelees*, where the affix *-lees* is that with semantic component of absence or lack of quality.

(3) *So that the wolf ne made it nought miscarye:*

He was a shepherde and nought a mercenarye (Chaucer 2005: 82). – In this case *miscarye* the affix – *mis-* with semantic component of “bad”, “incorrect”, “mistaken” is used.

(4) *Al speke he nevere so rudeliche and large,
Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewre,*

Or feine thing or finde wordes newe (Chaucer 2005: 87). – In the fourth example *untrewre-un-* the affix with a semantic component of absence or lack of quality is used.

The examples mentioned above belong to the same part of speech; they are mainly verbs while *waterlees* and *recchelees* are adjectives. Correspondingly, they perform different functions in the sentence – predicates and predicatives.

The way in which sentential negation is expressed has undergone a number of changes in the process of the historical development of the English language. The history of English sentential negation reflects O. Jespersen’s generalization that the various stages of the development pattern are individually attested in languages. This pattern is sometimes referred to as the Negative Cycle (Jespersen 1962: 10). It can be summed up as follows: original negative markers weaken phonologically, drifting towards the left periphery of the clause in the Germanic languages. There they often become (pro)clitic to the finite verb, whereby they lose so much of their negative value that they need to be reinforced by an independent, usually postverbal, element, which eventually comes to be the sole negative marker, with the clitic marker becoming optional and eventually disappearing. The diachronic development of English sentential negation accurately mirrors Jespersen’s Negative Cycle. Its various stages may be illustrated as follows:

1. “classical” Old English: *ne*, always preceding the finite verb: *Ic ne secge* (Jespersen 1962: 11);

2. late Old English and throughout the Middle English period: *ne* strengthened by *not*; finite verbs placed between *ne* and *not*: *I ne seye not* (Jespersen 1962: 11);

3. beginning in the late Middle English period *ne* in the *ne... not* periphrastic negation is commonly left unexpressed; finite verbs placed in front of *not*: *I say not* (Jespersen 1962: 11);

4. beginning in the fifteenth century, two parallel alternatives arose in the domain of “lexical” verbs:

- the inflected lexical verb follows *not* (this type, which was never very frequent, disappears in the second half of the eighteenth century): *I not say* [+Fin];

- the uninflected lexical verb follows *not* while a finite form of the dummy verb *do* precedes *not* (survives as the only way of marking clausal negation with lexical verbs; *not* develops an enclitic form – *n't*: *I do not say*, *I don't say* (Jespersen 1962: 10).

So, the Old English paradigm of negation includes the negative particle *ne* used in the initial position – preverb or presubject. Whereas the New English particle combines with an auxiliary and can be contracted, the Old English particle can be combined with the verbs *habban* “have” and *wyllan* “will”.

The development of English negation in the Middle English and Early Modern English periods traverses three stages.

Within the framework of the analysis of “*Canterbury Tales*” by Geoffrey Chaucer, 444 examples of *no*-usage and 461 examples of *not/nat* usage have been found. It is important to mention that *no*-examples are usually put before nouns, while *not/nat* examples are put after adjectives and verbs.

Here are some examples, where particle *no* is put before nouns:

(1) *He nevere yit no vilainye ne saide in al his lif unto no manere wight: ne was a verray, parfit, gentil knight* (Chaucer 2005: 71).

(2) *Of priking and of hunting fore the hare was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare* (Chaucer 2005: 74).

In the sentence (1) the noun performs the syntactical function of object while in the sentence (2) – the one of adverbial modifier of manner.

(3) *Ful thredbare was his overste countepy, for he hadde geten him yit nobenefice, ne was so wordly for to have office* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(4) *No beerd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have; as smoothe it was as it were late yshave: I trowe he were a gelding or a mare* (Chaucer 2005: 86).

The sentences (3) and (4) include the nouns that perform the syntactical function of objects too. In the sentence (4) it is possible to observe stylistic inversion, when the particle *no* is put before the noun in the function of object.

The following examples include particles *nat/not*. In comparison with previous sentences particles *nat/not* are put mainly after verbs.

(1) *His hors were goode, but he was nat gay* (Chaucer 2005: 72).

(2) *He was nat pale as a forpined gost: a fat swan loved he best of any rost* (Chaucer 2005: 75).

(3) *He may nat weepe though him sore smorte: therefore, instede of weeping and prayers, men mote give silver to the poore freres* (Chaucer 2005: 75).

(4) *Oure counseil was nat longe for to seeche* (Chaucer 2005: 88).

(5) *To have with sike lazars acquaintance: it is nat honeste, it may nought avaunce, for to delen with no swich poraile, but al with riche, and sellers of vitaille; and over al ther as profit sholde arise, curteis he was, and lowely of servise* (Chaucer 2005: 88).

It is important to mention that Geoffrey Chaucer uses both variants of the particle – *not* and *nat*, that can be explained by the transitional period of the development of the English language; period, when the Canterbury Tales were written. For example:

(1) *Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace that swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace the wisdom of an heep of lerned men?* (Chaucer 2005: 83).

(2) *Us thought it was not worth to make it wis, and graunted him withouten more avis, and bade him saye his voidit as him leste* (Chaucer 2005: 88).

(3) *Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day, and eek it nedeth nat for to devyse, at every cours, the ordre of hire servyse* (Chaucer 2005: 111).

(4) *I wol nat taryen yow, for it is pryme, and for it is no fruyt but los of tyme* (Chaucer 2005: 111).

(5) *I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes, ne of hir swannes, nor of hire heronsewes* (Chaucer 2005: 112).

Besides the particles *no*, *not/nat*, 376 examples of usage of the particle *ne* can be found. The following examples reflect their main tendency of usage in the text.

Taking into consideration the fact that the text of the “Canterbury Tales” embraces peculiarities of both Old English and Middle English that is why it is possible to find the particle *ne* in it. It precedes or follows such parts of speech as verb and noun:

(1) *But he nelafte nought for rain nethunder, in siknesse nor in mischief, to visite the ferreste in his parish, muche and lite, upon his feet, and in his hand a staf* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(2) *He nevere yit no vilainye ne saide in al his lif unto no manere wight: ne wasa verray, parfit, gentil knight* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(3) *Ful thredbare was his overste countepe, for he hadde geten him yit no benefice, ne was so wordly for to have office* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(4) *Ther nas quirksilver, litarge, ne brimstoon, boras, ceruce, ne oile of tarternoon, ne oinement that wolde clense and bite, that him mighte helpen of his cheeks* (Chaucer 2005: 85).

(5) “*Cometh neer*”, *quod he*, “*my lady Prioress, and ye, sire Clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse – nestudieth nought. Lay hand to, every man!*” (Chaucer 2005: 89).

So, if the particles *no*, *not/nat* are usually placed before nouns, adjectives and verbs, the negative particle *ne* can be found mainly before verbs, except the rare sentences when the negative particle *ne* is found before nouns, and the mentioned examples prove it.

So, summing up the above mentioned examples, we may state that there is a high frequency of the particle usage in the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer in comparison with other parts of speech. All of them are placed before or after different parts of speech that perform different functions in the sentence (object and adverbial modifier). That is why it is possible to distinguish and analyse them separately.

Having studied the negative pronouns paradigm in the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer, we can state that in the Old English language negative pronouns were formed by fusion of a negative particle *ne* with indefinite pronoun *æ niz* and numeral *an* in its pronominal function. It is important to mention that during the Middle English Period the pronoun *no* was used together with *none*. It was not influenced by vowel changes (shortening), because there were no conditions to cause them, and that is why [ō] turned into [ou]; in such a way a new pronoun *no* appeared and it became an element of pronouns *nobody* and *no one*. We can distinguish such negative pronouns as *nothyng*, *noon*, *none*, *neither*, *nān*, *nanig*.

In the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer we found 375 examples of negative pronouns usage – 130 examples of *noon* usage, 1 – of *noone* usage, 119 examples of *nothyng* usage, 119 examples of *neither* usage and 7 examples of *none* usage. In the following table we offer the frequency of the negative pronouns’ usage in the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer.

The following four instances include the negative pronoun *nothyng*. In the sentences (2), (3), (4) *nothyng* performs the syntactical function of object in the sentence. In the sentence (3), the negative pronoun *nothyng* performs the function of the predicative:

(1) *His arwes drouped nothyngwith fetheres lowe* (Chaucer 2005: 72).

(2) *He yaf nothyng of that text a pulled hen that saith that hunters been nought holy men, ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees, is likned til a fissh that is waterlees – this is to sayn, a monk out of his cloister* (Chaucer 2005: 74).

(3) *Hir frendshipe was nothingnewe to beginner* (Chaucer 2005: 80).

(4) *She was a worthy woman al hire live: housbondes at chirche dore she hadde five, without en other compaignye in youthe – but ther of needeth nothing to speke as nouthe* (Chaucer 2005: 81).

The next examples include *noon/noone* – a negative pronoun that performs the function of the subject in the sentence:

(1) *With us ther was a Doctour of Physic: in al this world ne was ther noon him lik to speken of physic and of surgerye* (Chaucer 2005: 80).

(2) *A bettre preest I trowe ther nowher noon is* (Chaucer 2005: 81).

(3) *...ther wasnoon auditour coude on him winne* (Chaucer 2005: 84).

(4) ...*For trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon to ride by the waye domb as stoon* (Chaucer 2005: 85).

(5) *This Cambynskan, of which I have yow toold, in roial vestiment sit on his deys, w ith diademe, ful heighe in his paleys, and halt his feeste so solempne and so ryche, that in this world ne was ther noon it lyche* (Chaucer 2005: 99).

In some cases, the negative pronoun *noon/noone* is used together with the grammatical construction *ther is/ther was*:

(1) *With us ther was a Doctour of Physic: in al this world ne was ther noone him lik to speken of physic and of surgerye* (Chaucer 2005: 80).

(2) *There was noon swich from Hulle to cartage* (Chaucer 2005: 80).

So, to sum up, that there are no examples of the Old English negative pronouns in the “*Canterbury Tales*” by Geoffrey Chaucer, because they completely disappeared from Middle English and that is why they cannot be found in the discourse of that time.

Negative adverbs paradigm in the “*Canterbury Tales*” by Geoffrey Chaucer is a considerable part in studying the category of negation in Medieval English literature. As it has been already mentioned, negative adverbs deprecate the existence of the notion, marked by the root morpheme of the mentioned adverb. Thus, the adverbs *nowhere* and *never* express absence of place and time and that is why they perform the syntactic function of adverbial modifier of place and time correspondingly.

Negative adverbs in Middle English as well as negative pronouns are formed with the help of the negative particles *no* and *ne*. In the “*Canterbury Tales*” by Geoffrey Chaucer we found 172 examples of negative adverbs: 8 – *nowher* (negative adverb of place) and 138/26 – *nevere/never* (negative adverb of time).

These include the negative adverbs of place (*nowher*) and time (*nevere*) performing the syntactic functions of adverbial modifier of place and time correspondingly:

(1) *There was no mannowher so virtuous: he was the beste beggere in his hous* (Chaucer 2005: 76).

(2) *So greet a purchasour wasnowher noon* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(3) *Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas; and yit he seemed bisier than he was* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(4) *...was nowhere swich a worthy vavasour* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

(5) *A bettre preest I trowe ther nowher noon is* (Chaucer 2005: 77).

So, it is possible to conclude that the examples of the negative adverbs in the “*Canterbury Tales*” by Geoffrey Chaucer are not numerous, but completely belong to Middle English and do not include the features of the Old English language.

To put the matter of the category of negation in Medieval English literature to rest, the notions of mononegation and polynegation at the syntactic level in the discourse of Geoffrey Chaucer must be considered. As we have mentioned, mononegation is the linguistic phenomenon or the characteristic ability of the

language to include one negator in the sentence that can make the whole sentence a negative one.

The Modern English negative sentence is characterized by mononegation and employs a preverbal particle combined with an auxiliary/modal/*have* and *be* verbs where the preverbal negative particle combines with an auxiliary/modal/*have* and *be* makes the whole sentence negative. The same refers to Middle English. The usage of polynegative sentences becomes rare and the authors usually apply mononegative sentences that affirm the process of simplification and the general development of the language:

(1) *And therto hadde he ridden, no man ferre, as wel in Cristendom as he herthenesse, and evere honoured for his worthinesse* (Chaucer 2005: 71).

(2) *His hors were goode, but he was nat gay* (Chaucer 2005: 72).

(3) *She leet no morsel from his lippes falle, ne wette hir fingers in hir sauce deepe* (Chaucer 2005: 73).

(4) *He yaf nought of that text a pulled hen that saith that hunters been noughtholy men, ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees, is likned til a fissh that is waterlees – this is to sayn, a monk out of his cloister* (Chaucer 2005: 74).

(5) *Of priking and of hunting fore the hare was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare* (Chaucer 2005: 74).

Having analysed the sentences above, it is possible to mention that all of them are mononegative, i.e. they include only one negator. In all cases, the negator belongs to the particular part of speech. The particles *no*, *ne*, *not/nat* take a significant place in the majority of examples. They are usually put before nouns, adjectives and verbs and make the whole sentence negative that proves the mononegative character of Middle English. Besides particles, there are a number of negative pronouns used in the text. Correspondingly, they perform the functions of object and predicative in the sentence.

As it was mentioned, polynegation is the linguistic phenomenon or the characteristic ability of the language to include more than one negator that can make the whole sentence negative, the accumulation of negation in the sentence. The problem of polynegation in Old English was discussed many times but it still needs deeper research. L. Kedova states that poetry is rich in mononegative sentences, while in prose it is possible to find a great number of polynegative sentences (Kedova 1988: 38).

Within the framework of our research, we examined 280 negative sentences. The results are as follows: 175 sentences are polynegative and 105 sentences are mononegative. Our results prove that poetry is rich in mononegative sentences.

At the same time there are a number of polynegative sentences:

(1) *He nevere yit no vilainye ne saide in al his lif unto no manere wight: ne was a verray, parfit, gentil knight* (Chaucer 2005: 71). We can observe five negators in this sentence: *nevere*, *no*, *ne*, *no*, *ne*, that belong to different parts of speech (negative adverb and negative particle). The same thing can be said about

the rest of the sentences – all of them include more than one negator that performs different functions in the sentence.

The next sentences include more than one negator, and it proves their polynegation. The remains of Old English grammar that belong to the phenomenon of polynegation can be found in the texts that belong to the Middle English monuments:

(1) *Wel coude she carye a morsel, and wel keepe that nodrope ne fille upon hir brest* (Chaucer 2005: 73). – Negative particles precede the predicate of the sentence.

(2) *There was no man nowher so virtuous: he was the beste beggere in his hous* (Chaucer 2005: 76). – The negative particle precedes the subject, the negative adverb performs the function of adverbial modifier of place.

(3) *So greet a purchasour was nowhernoon, al was fee symple to hym in effect, his purchasyng myghte nat been infect* (Chaucer 2005: 77). – The negative adverb performs the function of adverbial modifier of place, the negative pronoun performs the syntactic function of object.

(4) *With us ther was a Doctour of Physic: in al this world ne was ther noonhim lik to speken of physyc and of surgerye* (Chaucer 2005: 80). – The negative particle precedes the predicate of the sentence, the negative pronoun performs the function of subject.

(5) *In al the parissh wif ne was ther noon that to the offring before hire sholde goon, and if ther dide, certain so wroth was she that she was out of alle charitee* (Chaucer 2005: 81). – The negative particle precedes the predicate of the sentence, negative pronoun performs the function of subject.

To sum up, it is possible to mention that the frequency of mononegative sentences usage is higher (63%) than that of polynegative sentences usage (37%) and it can be explained by the general development of English language and the stylistic peculiarities of the “Canterbury Tales”.

In the article, the problem of negation in the author’s discourse on the material of the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer has been considered and functional characteristics of negators at both morphological and syntactic levels have been revealed.

Hence, the **conclusions** are as follows:

- the author’s discourse in general reflects peculiarities of the author and embraces a number of lexical and grammatical means that reveal the development of the language in diachrony;

- there is a high frequency of particle usage (*ne, not/nat, no*) in the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer and all of them are placed before or after different parts of speech that perform the functions of object or adverbial modifier in the sentence;

- the usage of negative pronouns and adverbs reflects the pure Middle English without the remnants of Old English;

- the phenomenon of polynegation is traced under analysis and it proves the fact that the “Canterbury Tales” belong to the literary monuments of the transitional period of the language development;

- polynegation is achieved by means of the following parts of speech combinations: particle + adverb; particle + particle; particle + pronoun; adverb + pronoun; particle + particle + pronoun; particle + particle + adverb.

- the frequency of mononegative sentences usage is higher than that of polynegative ones and it can be explained by the fact that the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer belong to poetical works.

To sum up our investigation, we may state that the grammatical field of negation is a very relevant problem in modern linguistics. All the components of the field can be divided into affixal and non-affixal negation, wherein non-affixal negation takes a kernel position.

The means of expressing negation constitute the hierarchically organized system of heterogeneous language units of morphological, lexical and syntactic language levels united by a similar semantic function.

The diachronic development of negation in the English language may be observed from an older stage, when an insertion of the negative particle *ne* was the main source of the evolution of negators to the present-day Standard English with its loss of multiple negation.

Polynegation in Old English is not a general linguistic phenomenon, that is why it is impossible to speak about it as a norm for Old English. But a dialectal phenomenon that was peculiar to the West-Saxon dialect then is the norm in the national language.

The author’s discourse is characterized by the following peculiarities: individual creative work; individual usage of words; individual combination of words; developed synonymic groups; tropes; stylistic-syntactical methods.

The paradigm of negation in the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer is realized at the morphological and syntactic levels with the help of the following means: negative affixes *un, mis, lees*; negative particles *not/nat, no, ne*; negative pronouns *nothing, noon, noone, none*; negative adverbs *nowher, nevere*; negative sentences that include one negator (mononegation); negative sentences that include more than one negator (polynegation).

The frequency of mononegative sentences usage is bigger than that of polynegative sentences and it can be explained by the general development of the English language. So, the “Canterbury Tales” are characterized by the following features: the double usage of two forms of the same negator (*nevere/never*); the usage of one and more than one negator in the sentence; two-way usage of mononegative and polynegative sentences.

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ABSTRACT

The article “On the category of negation in Medieval English literature” deals with the main aspects of expressing the category of negation in Medieval English literature, based the example of the “Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer. Among the most productive ways we mention negative affixes, negative pronouns, negative adverbs, mononegation and polynegation at the syntactic level.

Key words: negation, Medieval English, part of speech

REZUMAT

Articolul de față abordează principalele aspecte ale exprimării categoriei negației în literatura engleză medievală, pe baza exemplului „Poveștilor din Canterbury” de Geoffrey Chaucer. Printre cele mai productive tehnici menționăm afixele negative, pronumele negative, adverbele negative, mononegația și polinegația la nivel sintactic.

Cuvinte-cheie: negație, engleză medievală, parte de vorbire