

# NEGATION AFFIXES IN ENGLISH

**Dedy Subandowo**

Muhammadiyah University of Metro

**Abstract:** This research entitled "*Negation Affixes in English*". This study is aimed to describe the various negation affixes in English, morphological process, morphophonemic and meaning. The research data were taken from various sources of English grammar book, morphology, research journal and the book which relates to the research. English grammar books used in this study are written by Otto Jespersen, Marcella Frank, Greenbaum and Geoffrey Leech. The method used in this research is the *descriptive-qualitative method*. While the data collection techniques are performed by using *jot-down method*. And the results of analysis are presented in *tabular form* and *descriptive method*. The result of the research shows that English has six types of negative affixes which are categorized by the intensity of its appearance, such as *dis-*, *in-*, *non-*, *un-*, *anti-* and *-less*. Based on the function, negation affixes are divided into several categories such as *adjectives*, *nouns*, *verbs*, and *adverbs*. The morphophonemic affix *in-* has four allomorphs, they are *in-*, *im-*, *il-* and *ir-*. While the analysis revealed that negation affixes have some basic meanings, such as 'not', 'without', and 'anti'.

**Keyword:** *Negative Affixes, English, Morphology*

## Introduction

Negation is not a new topic which accured recently. It has been argued since Aristotle came out with the idea about logic. Aristotle clearly attaches the greatest importance to

this topic. He sets out three types of opposition of particular interest such as *contrariety*, *privation*, and *contradiction*. Aristotle says that contradiction is the primary opposition, for it is sheer,

unintermediated opposition. But it is and this may be crucial an opposition of statements, not of terms (and so, of things). To be sure, the asserted propositions are indeed also about things. But Aristotle insists:

*“...what underlies the affirmation and negation is not the affirmation or negation for what underlies is in no way a sentence. These things are, however, said to oppose each other as do affirmation and negation”.* (EvaT.H. Brann The way of Naysaying in [http://books.google.co.id/books/the\\_way\\_of\\_naysaying](http://books.google.co.id/books/the_way_of_naysaying))

Negation is the act or an instance of denying (Rakhmania, 2009:1). It is the opposite of a positive character or quality. Almost as soon as we are born, we can use negation indicated by gesture or other behaviors that we reject, exclude or disagree with something. Because it is so common

and easily-mastered, negation may seem to be a simple concept. However, the use of negation in our daily lives is not as simple as it seems. Like stated above, negation may be indicated by gesture and other behaviors, such as, *utterance*. By gesture, we can show negation by shaking our head by moving it side to side. But it is not always the case. In other country with different cultures, there are a lot of ways to show negation. Another way of negating is through the utterance. As we all know, in grammar, negation is the process to transform an affirmative statement into its opposite (negative statement).

We often use a single word ‘no’ to say that we do not have the same idea as what has been said or asked. We use ‘not’ also to state

disagreement but it does not stand alone, as in *He is not running* or *He is not intelligent* these come after a *be* and followed by verb (*running*) or adjective (*intelligent*) etc.

Affixal negation is a process of word-formation, by which a new word is built from a word stem, usually through the addition of an affix, either at the beginning (prefix) or the end of the stem (suffix). A negative affix is an affix that opposes or negates a word (Dzuganova, 2006:332). The word *disagree* also denotes negation because it is the opposite of the word *agree* a positive idea which then be added by a prefix *dis-*, indicating negative idea.

### **Discussion**

The most frequently used negative prefixes are: *dis-*, *in-*, *non-*, *un-* and *anti-*. There is only one

negative suffix *-less* (Dzuganova, 2006:332).

#### 1. Negative Prefix *dis-*

Jespersen (1960) writes: "the prefix *dis-* (from Latin) besides various other meanings also has that of a pure negative, as in *dissimilar*, *dishonest*, *disagree*, *disuse*, *dislike*, *disbelieve*, generally implying contrary rather than contradictory opposition." The negative prefix *dis-* is used most often with verbs and abstract nouns, as in the following examples: *disobey* - *disobedience*, *disbelieve*— *disbelief*, *displease* - *displeasure*. *Dis-* added to adjectives makes them negative, e.g. *dishonest*, *disloyal*, and *disobedient*.

## 2. Negative Prefix *in-*

The negative prefix *in-* added to adjectives means "not" (*incompatible, incompetent, independent, inorganic, insufficient, intolerant, invalid*); and added to nouns means "without, lacking" (*inaccuracy, inattention, incompatibility, incompetence, innutrition, insufficiency, intolerance*). We have not found any verb negated by means of *in-*.

According to the rules of Latin phonology the prefix *in-* can have four basic forms (called allomorphs), e.g. *indecent, impossible, illogical, irrational* according to the beginning consonant of the word to which it is added. Before the consonants /b/, /m/, and /p/, *in-* becomes *im-*:

*imbalanced, immature, immediate, immedicable, impatient*, before words starting with the letter "l", *in-* changes into *il-* as in *illegal, illegible, illegitimate, illogical*. The allomorphic *ir-* variety can be added to some words beginning with the consonant "r", e.g. *irrational, irregular, ir-relevant, irreligious, irresponsible*. (The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary).

## 3. Negative Prefix *non-*

The prefix *non-*, which means "not", comes from Latin *non*. The prefix was used primarily in Roman law terms, which were adopted into Old French and then into English. *Non-* can be added to almost any adjective. Some examples include *non-active, non-*

*breakable, non-defensive, non-specific, nonessential, non-interrupted, non-irritating, and non-productive. Non-* also combines with many nouns, as in *nonentity, nonresident, and non-violence*. It never combines with verbs.

It is interesting to note that the great majority of non-formed adjectives are morphologically complex words. Most of them end in *-al, -ible, -ic, -ing, -ous*, etc. This may be connected with the fact that many simplex adjectives (such as *small, long*) have obvious simplex antonyms.

The spelling of the prefix *non-* varies. In the older texts, dictionaries, textbooks, and other materials the prefix *non-* was

strictly written with hyphen, today it is more and more written together with word it negates (very frequent in American English), or both varieties are used (dzuganova, 2006:334).

According to Randolph Quirk et al (1985) the negative prefix *non-* means "not" or "absence of something" and can be used with adjectives, adverbs and nouns, e.g. *non-academic, non-economic, nonessential, non-existent, non-alcoholic, non-fatal; nonsmoker, non-reader; non-essentially*. It is also used to form a neutral negative sense when a form in *in-* or *un-* has a special sense or usually unfavourable connotation e.g. *noncontroversial vs uncontroversial; non-effectivex*

*ineffective; nonhuman x unhuman*  
*x inhuman.*

#### 4. Negative Prefix *un-*

"Un-" is the native English prefix used for negation. The negative prefix *un-* chiefly attaches to simple adjectives with a native basis, e.g. *unclean, uneven, unfair, unwise, unafraid, unfit*. Many derived adjectives also take this prefix. Denominal derivatives are chiefly characterized by the suffixes *-ed, -y, -ly, -ful, -al, -ish, -(i)ous, -worthy*. Examples are: *unprincipled, unlucky, unmotherly, unfaithful, unconditional, unselfish, unceremonious, and untrustworthy*. Deverbal derivatives are likewise common. They are all formed with the suffix *-able*. Some examples of this very

productive type are *unbelievable, unacceptable, unachievable, unadvisable*, etc.

It also attaches to adjectives made of participles, as in *unbending, unending, unfailing, unfeeling*, etc.; *unborn, unemployed, unfinished, unseen, unstressed, untouched, unsaid* etc. Less frequently, this same prefix attaches to nouns: *unacceptance, unbelief, unconcern, unharmony, unhealth, unheroism, unintelligence, uninterrupted, unluck, unsuccess, unsatisfaction, unrest*, etc.

Some words that take the *un-* prefix in their adjectival form may have a noun form that uses the negative prefix *in-*. Such combinations include: *unable* vs

*inability*, *uncivil* (ill-mannered, rude) vs *incivility* (lack of politeness), *unequal* vs *inequality*, *unjust* vs *injustice*, *unstable* vs *instability*.

#### 5. Negative Prefix *Anti-*

Negative prefix *anti-* is derived from the Greek which is used to denote the opposite of something. In general, *anti-* attached to nouns and adjectives, such as *anti-submarine* “against the submarines”, *anti-aircraft* ‘describes weapons, equipment or activities that are intended to destroy or defend against enemy aircraft’, *anti-terrorist*, *antisocial*, *anti-clockwise* “direction opposite clockwise”, and *antifreeze*.

#### 6. Negative Suffix *-less*

The only negative suffix in English is the suffix *-less*. It comes from the Old English word *leas*, meaning "without". In Old English and Middle English, *-less* was often used to convey the negative or opposite of words ending in *-ful*, as in *careful* - *careless*, *colourful* - *colourless*, *doubtful* —*doubtless*, *fearful* —*fearless*, *fruitful* —*fruitless*, *helpful* - *helpless*, *hopeful* - *hopeless*, *meaningful* - *meaningless*, *useful* - *useless*.

#### Conclusion

There are six affixes as negation markers in English; *dis-*, *in-*,

*non-*, *un-*, *anti-*, and *-less*. There are only two affixes that categorized into native English; *un-* and *-less*. Affixes *dis-* (Latin) found in adjectives, verbs and abstract nouns. The prefix *dis-* has a negative meaning (pure negative) such as 'against', 'lack of something or 'not'. Prefix *dis-* is generally more reflective the opposite forms than contradictory forms.

Negation prefix *in-* is specially attached to an adjective beginning with the sounds / b/, /l/, /m/, /p/, or /t/. Prefix *in-* comes from Latin. Prefix *in-* is essentially has basic meaning "not". Based on the rules of Latin phonology, prefix *in-* has four forms, *in-*, *im-*, *il-*, and *ir-*. Affix *in-* changes into *im-* before consonant / b /, /m/ and /p /, before words starting with the letter 'l', *in-* changes into *il-*. The allomorphic

*ir-* variety can be added to some words beginning with the consonants /r/. Prefix *in-* has various meanings such as, *not*, *opposite of*, *without* and *lacking*.

Prefix *non-* is from Latin. Prefix *non-* is attached to adjectives ending *-al*, *-ible*, *-ic*, *-ing*, *-ous*, adverbs and nouns. The prefix *un-* is attached to adjectives and nouns, and can be attached to verbs and nouns to form verbs. Prefix *non-* has basic meaning "not" and "without". The spelling of the prefix *non-* which appears in the older texts, dictionaries, textbooks, and other materials was strictly written with hyphen, today it more and more written together with word it negates (very frequent in American English), or both varieties are used. It means that French *non-* of Latin origin is not felt foreign in

English any more and it is being anglicitized.

The prefix *un-* is native English which is used for negation. In Old English prefix *un-* has a role very productive, especially in the adjective. Prefix *un-* has basic meaning “not”. The negative prefix *un-* chiefly attaches to simple adjectives with a native basis. Many derived adjectives also take this prefix. The denominal derivative are chiefly characterized by the suffixes *-ed, -y, -ly, -ful, -al, -ish, -(i)ous, -worthy*. Deverbal derivatives are likewise common. They are all formed with the suffix *-able*. Prefix *un-* is also attached to adjectives made of participles.

Prefix *anti-* is originally from Greek. This prefix has basic meaning “*opposed to; against*”. In general, this

negative prefix *anti-* is attached to nouns and adjectives.

The only negative suffix in English is *-less*. This suffix has basic meaning “*without*”. This suffix is to convey the negative or opposite of words ending in *-ful*.

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