

## Negation in English, Arabic and Kurdish: A Contrastive Study

Asst. Inst. Nafal Salih Islam

Kurdish Language and Linguistics/ Duhok University / Iraq

[nafal.salih@uod.ac](mailto:nafal.salih@uod.ac)

Asst. Inst. Ajwad T. Abood,

Ministry of Education / English Language and Linguistics / Iraq

[ajwad.abood@yahoo.com](mailto:ajwad.abood@yahoo.com)

Received: 6/6/2022

Accepted: 25/9/2022

Published: 15/3/2023

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.36473/ujhss.v62i1.2033>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### Abstract

The present study focuses on the points of similarities and differences found in English, Arabic and Kurdish languages in terms of negation. The three languages belong to different families and they all exist in the researchers own country (Iraq). Arabic is spoken natively in the middle, the western and the southern parts. Kurdish is spoken natively in the northern part called Kurdistan Region. English is a foreign language in all parts of Iraq. All the three languages under study are taught as school subjects all over Iraq in general and higher education. Negation is dealt with in the three languages mentioned above in terms of word negation and sentence negation. Word negation discusses the way in which a word is negated, i.e., how prefixes and suffixes are used to reverse the meaning of the word an affix is added to. Sentence negation is dealt with in terms of how the affirmative declarative sentence is negated in all the three languages mentioned above. Findings show that negation in the three languages under examination is different parametrically.

**Keywords:** Arabic language, Contrastive Analysis, English language, Kurdish, Negation.

### أسلوب النفي في اللغة الانكليزية والعربية والكردية : دراسة تقابلية

م.م. نفل صالح اسلام

علم اللغة الكردية/جامعة دهوك / العراق

[nafal.salih@uod.ac](mailto:nafal.salih@uod.ac)

م.م. أجود ثامر عبود

علم اللغة الانكليزية/ وزارة التربية / العراق

[ajwad.abood@yahoo.com](mailto:ajwad.abood@yahoo.com)

### المخلص

تركز الدراسة الحالية على اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين اللغات الانكليزية والعربية والكردية فيما يتعلق بأسلوب النفي. كل من هذه اللغات الثلاثة تنتمي الى عائلة مختلفة عن عائلة اللغة الاخرى وجميعها موجودة في بلد الباحثين (العراق). حيث تعتبر اللغة العربية اللغة الام في وسط و غرب و جنوب العراق. أما اللغة الكردية فهي اللغة الام في الجزء الشمالي المسمى اقليم كردستان العراق. تعد اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية في جميع انحاء العراق و أن جميع

اللغات الثلاث مدار البحث تدرس في المدارس في جميع انحاء العراق على مستوى التعليم العام و التعليم العالي. قد تم دراسة اسلوب النفي في اللغات الثلاثة المذكورة اعلاه على مستوى نفي الكلمة و نفي الجملة. تم التطرق في نفي الكلمة الى طريقة النفي عن طريق بوادي الكلمة و لواحقها (Prefixes and Suffixes) المستخدمة لنفي الكلمة. أما فيما يتعلق بنفي الجملة في الثلاث لغات أنفة الذكر فقد تم التطرق الى كيفية نفي الجملة المثبتة الخبرية. هذا و توصلت نتائج الدراسة الى أن الاختلاف في اسلوب النفي في اللغات الثلاثة يختلف بحسب النظام النحوي و الصرفي لكل لغة من هذه اللغات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة العربية ، التحليل التقابلي ، اللغة الإنجليزية ، اللغة الكردية ، اسلوب النفي.

## **Introduction**

Language is the best means of communication man has ever invented and developed. It is through language that people communicate and exchange their thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes. Without language, there might be no life at all.

Negation is one of the significant language areas that should be given considerable attention and due practice. A wrong use of negation may mean that a sentence is affirmative and the meaning is made upside down. In Iraq, erroneous use of negation is observed where Arabs and Kurds communicate or when English is used as a lingua franca.

### **1. The Problem**

A multilingual speech community usually uses more than one means of communication (language). Therefore, in a multilingual speech community, an individual has more than one mother tongue and one or more than one foreign language.

In such language context, errors are likely to happen especially when the foreign language is academically learned. If those errors are not realized and corrected, they might possibly become deep-rooted habits that are difficult to correct.

In Iraq, people in the north speak Kurdish natively with Arabic as a second language and English as a foreign language. Similarly, people in the middle and south speak Arabic natively with English as a foreign language and they know a little Kurdish. Both speakers (Arabs and Kurds) have difficulty in the subject-matter. Field observations proved that negation is one of the problematic issues because of which a great deal of unintelligibility takes place.

### **2. Aims of the Study**

The study aims to show aspects of similarities and differences that may arise in terms of word and sentence negation between English, Arabic and Kurdish.

### **3. Research Questions**

The present study tries to find answers to such questions as:

1. To what extent negation is similar in the three languages under study.

2. To what extent negation is different in the three languages under study.

#### **4. Hypotheses**

It is hypothesized that:

1. Iraqi EFL teachers do not teach negation comparatively and contrastively.
2. There are many negation differences among the three languages and those differences affect intelligibility.

#### **5. Methodology**

##### **5.1. The Data**

The data has been collected from specialized references of the field. It has taken into consideration only the standard form of the three language under examination.

#### **6. Limitation of the Study**

The study is limited to analyzing negation in three languages, viz., English, Arabic and Kurdish on word and sentence levels.

#### **7. Value of the Study**

The study is of importance to EFL teachers, EFL students and all English language researchers in general.

#### **8. Literature Review**

##### **8.1. Negation**

Ritchards, Platt and Platt (1992, p. 243) define negation as contradicting the meaning or part of the meaning of a sentence. Hartman and Stork (1976, p. 150) states that negation is to make a negative statement.

##### **8.2. Contrastive Analysis (CA)**

According to Aziz (1989, p. 7) contrastive analysis is within the framework of contrastive linguistics which aims at pointing at the similarities and dissimilarities found in two or more languages, usually certain areas of grammar are compared and contrasted.

Contrastive linguistics falls into two types: theoretical and applied. The former deals with contrastive studies within the scope of general linguistics. The latter is of pedagogical objectives, i.e., it may be used profitably in second and foreign language learning (Aziz, 1989, p. 7).

#### **9. Doing Contrastive Analysis**

Contrastive analysis is carried out in three consecutive stages. (1). Description of language A, (2). Description of language B; and (3). Contrasting the results of both descriptions (Aziz, 1989, p. 7).

## 10. English

Hornby (2015, p. 509) defines English as the language originally of England and now spoken in a number of other countries and used as a language of international communication all over the world.

Smith (1960, p. 1) does not agree with Hornby (2015, p. 509) in that he states that it is no sense to say that English is native to England. It was brought thither by the German tribes who invaded the Island in the fifth and sixth centuries. If this Teutonic invasion had never taken place, the inhabitants of England would speak now a language descended from Latin.

Hornby (2015, 509) contradicts what has been mentioned by Hamza (1974, p. 7) where Hamza agrees with Smith (1960, p. 1) as he states that since English language did not originate in England, it is neither purely English nor purely native.

It was introduced into the Island about the middle of the fifth century and it undergone continuous developments throughout fifteen hundred years. English began to grow and develop linguistically when the Teutonic tribes settled in Britain.

## 11. Arabic

Arabic is the language of the Arabs. Arabs are those Semitic people who speak Arabic (Hornby, 1974, p. 39). Arabic (al-arabiyyah) is a name referring to the classical Arabic language of the sixth century AD used in the Islamic sacred book "Qura'an". It includes the modern standard form used in most written documents, lectures and broadcasts and the spoken Arabic varieties (Wikipedia, 2011, p. 1).

Aziz (1967, p. 7) states that standard Arabic (the language of Mudhar لغة مضر) including its grammar and idioms is the language of Qur'an. It is called by the native Arab philologists as العربية الفصحى which became the language of literature as distinguished from the local dialects spoken by the tribes. Arab tribes scattered in the Arab homeland developed various dialects due to a number of causes. Thus, Mudhar (Standard Arabic) lost a great deal of its presence. In this respect, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) says that:

اعلم ان عرف التخاطب في الامصار وبين الحضر ليس بلغة مضر القديمة ولا بلغة اهل الجيل بل هي بلغة اخرى قائمة بنفسها بعيدة عن لغة اهل مضر وعن لغة هذا الجيل العربي الذي لعهدنا وهي عن لغة مضر ابعد فاما انها لغة قائمة بنفسها فهو ظاهر يشهد له ما فيها من التغاير الذي يعد عند صناعة اهل النحو لحنًا .

## 12. Kurdish

Khalid (2015) refers that Kurdish is one of the widely used languages in some parts of the Middle East. It belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. Kurdish language is unstandardized; therefore, it has a huge gap that needs to be filled as this state causes negative effects on its speakers. Kurdish language is correlated with the Kurdish national identity (Khalid, 2022).

### **13. Methodology**

#### **13.1. Data Analysis**

##### **13.1.1. Negation in English (General)**

In English, the particle “not” is usually used to negate a sentence. It is inserted in the verb phrase. Therefore, as a main constituent, negation is correlated with the verb phrase. Some verb phrases require an auxiliary verb such as do, be, have, will, should, etc. In this case, “not” is placed after the first auxiliary verb (Abdul Majeed, 1979, p. 64).

Examples:

He will go to London. (Affirmative)

He will not go to London. (Negative)

He is playing tennis. (Affirmative)

He is not playing tennis. (Negative)

(Abdul Majeed, 1979, p. 65)

Phrases with more than one auxiliary verb, “not” is placed after the first auxiliary verb. Examples:

I have been reading. (Affirmative)

I have not been reading. (Negative)

(Al-Wahab, Al-Jumaili & Sabri, 1989, p. 117)

English sentences which contain finite full verbs other than “be” make a problem when negated, e.g., “not” does not fit. The auxiliary verb “do” is added to function as an operator and time indicator.

Examples:

1. He speaks. (Affirmative)

He does not speak. (Negative)

(Seidle, 1983, p. 22)

##### **3.1.1.2. Negation in English (Special)**

In some English sentences, negation is made even without “not”. It can take place by such forms as no, nobody, none, no one, nothing, nowhere, never, neither, an antonym such as interesting and boring, clever and lazy, etc. Negation can also be made adding a negating affix such as in, un, dis, mis, less, etc., (Abdul Majeed, 1979, pp. 101-113)

Examples:

1. There is a book on the table. (Affirmative)

There is no book on the table. (Negative)

2. She speaks English. (Affirmative)

She never speaks English. (Negative)

3. The report is correct. (Affirmative)

The report is incorrect. (Negative)

4. Anybody can fly. (Affirmative)

Nobody can fly. (Negative)

(Hornby, 2015 & Hamash, 1976)

### 13.1.2. Negation in Arabic (General)

Unlike the English sentence in which negation is related with the operator, An Arabic sentence is negated by means of particles which denote temporal reference and they are put before the negated item (Aziz, 1989, p. 239).

1. لن (lan): It is used with the subjunctive imperfect to indicate negation in the future.

لن يذهب الاولاد الى الحديقة . *Lan jathhab alawladdu ila alhadiqah*

The boys will not go to the garden.

لن يفهمو كلامك . *lan jafhamuu kalamaka*

They will not understand what you say.

2. لا (laa): It expresses present or future negation. It is used with the indicative imperfect.

لا اعرف الجواب . *Laa a'arif aljawab*

I do not know the answer.

Note: When (laa) is repeated twice, it indicates negation in the past with the perfect.

لا صدق ولا صلى . *Laa sadaq walaa salaa*

He has neither believed nor prayed.

Note: When لا is repeated twice, it indicates negation in the past with the perfect.

لا صدق ولا صلى . *laa sadaq wala sala*

He has neither believed nor prayed.

(Aziz, 1989, pp. 239-240)

3. ما (maa): it is used to negate verbs and phrases which include a perfect verb and theses which begin with the perfect auxiliary كان /kaana/.

ما حضر محمد . *hadhara muhamadun*

Mohammed came.

ما حضر محمد . *maa hadhara muhamadun*

Mohammed didn't come.

كان نبيل يكتب . *kaana nabeel jaktubu*

Nabeel was writing.

ما كان نبيل يكتب . *maa kaana nabeel jaktubu*

Nabeel wasn't writing.

(Abdul Majeed, 1979, p. 70)

لم (laam): It is used with the jussive imperfect to express negation in the past with or without present relevance.

لم ياتي علي الى الاجتماع.  
laam jaati ali ila elijtima'a  
Ali didn't come to the meeting.

Laam jaqul ahmed hatha  
Ahmed didn't say that.

لما (laama): In the formal style, laama is used to mean "not". Yet, it is followed by the jussive imperfect.

Laama jasil alkitar  
The train hasn't arrived yet.  
Laama jantahi sadiqi min wajibhu  
My friend hasn't finished his study yet.

(Aziz, 1989, p. 240)

/laysa/: In nominal sentences, laysa is placed before the subject and less commonly be placed before the predicate.

الولد هنا?  
The boy is here.

Laysa lwaladu hunaa  
ليس الولد هنا.

الولد ليس هنا?  
The boy is not here.

(Abdul Majeed, 1979, p. 73)

#### 13.1.2.1. Negation in Kurdish

In Kurdish language, affixes are used to negate verbs and adjectives. In Kurdish, the particles نه , نا and مه are used to denote negation in general (Ibo, 2008, p. 100). The particle (نى) is used in some cases instead of (نه) in present perfect only for purposes of fluency and easiness of pronunciation (Ali & Muneeb, 2016, p. 104). In present and future, negation looks similar in each, e.g. word formation is the same. Words do not change their forms (Ali & Muneeb, 2016, p. 117).

Table No. (1). Negation According to the Verb Tense

Negative	Affirmative	Time
نهوروز گولان ئافندهت. / لايسقي نوروز الورود Nawroz doesn't water the roses	نهوروز گولان ئافندهت. / يسقي نوروز الورود Nawroz waters the roses	Present
نهوروز گولان ئافندهت. / سوف لن يسقي نوروز الورد Nawroz will not water the roses	نهوروز دئ گولان ئافندهت. / سيسقي نوروز الورد Nawroz will water the roses	Future

Rasol (1991, pp. 28-31) states that such particles ، نه نا ، نه... نه بئ بهد ، نهك ، نهكه ، ، are used to negate adjectives.

Table No. (2). Adjective Negation

معناها بالعربي Its Arabic & English Meaning	كلمة كردية Kurdish Word	معناها بالعربي Its Arabic & English Meaning	Kurdish كلمة كردية Word
غير اصلي Not genuine	نارهسن	اصلي Genuine	رهسن
غير معروف Unknown	نهاسيار	معروف Known	ناسيار
غير مفيد Useless	بئ سود	مفيد Useful	بهسود
ذو اخلاق سيئة of bad manners	بهدهوشت	ذو اخلاق حسنة of good manners	رهوشت پاك

(Rasol, 1991, pp. 28-31)

Table No. (3). Negation in Kurdish in the Past, Present and Future

Negative النفى	Affirmative مثبت	Aspect	Case / الصيغة	Verb فعل
ئهم نه هاتم / لم اتي I didn't come	ئهم هاتم / اتيت I came	بسيط Simple	Declarative خبرية	
من رهژي نه دگرتن / لم اكن اصوم I wasn't fasting	من رهژي دگرتن / كنت اصوم I was fasting	مستمر Continuous		
ئهم نه هاتينه مالا وه / لم ناتي الى بيتكم.	ئهم هاتينه مالا وه / اتينا الى بيتكم	تام Perfect		



We hadn't come to your house	We had come to your house			ماضي Past
نهو روزی دهرگهه نهگرتبوو/ لم يقفل نوروز الباب Nawroz hadn't been locking the door	نهو روزی دهرگهه گرتبوو/ قفل نوروز الباب Nawroz had been locking the door	- تام مستمر Perfect Continuous		
ههکه من نهو کوتر نهگرتبا/ اتمنی لو لم امسک بتلك الحمامة I wish I didn't catch that pigeon	ههکه من نهو کوترگرتبا/ اتمنی لو امسکت بتلك الحمامة I wish I could catch that pigeon	بسيط Simple	- شرطية Conditional	
نهگهر ته پاره نههه بن, وئ ترومبیلئ نهبکره/ لو لم یکن لديک مال, لما کنت قد اشتریت تلك السیارة If you hadn't money, you wouldn't have bought that car.	نهگهر ته پاره هه بن, وئ ترومبیلئ بکره / لو کان لديک مال, لکنت قد اشتریت تلك السیارة If you had money, you would have bought that car	- تام Perfect		
نامئ نانقیسم / لا اكتب رسالة I don't write a message.	نامئ نقیسم/ اكتب رسالة I write a message	بسيط Simple	Declarative خبرية	الحاضر Present
نهز وائی نانقیسم/ لا اكتب الدرس I am not writing the lesson	نهز وائی دنقیسم/ أكتب الدرس I am writing the lesson	- مستمر Continuous		
نهو نانقیتم/ سوف لن ینام He will not sleep	نهو دئ نقیتم/ سوف ینام He will sleep	بسيط Simple	Declarative خبرية	

ئەگەر نه خوینم، بیهه رناکه شم اذا لن ادرس فسوف لن انجح If I don't study, I shall not pass	ئەگەر بخوینم، دئ بیهه رکه شم ان ادرس سانجح If I study, I shall pass	بسيط Simple	شرطية Conditional	المستقبل Future
سو بهی وانا کوردیی نه(مه) خوینه/ لا تقرأ الدرس الكردي غدا Don't read the Kurdish lesson tomorrow	سو بهی وانا کوردیی بخوینه/ اقرأ الدرس الكردي غدا read the Kurdish lesson tomorrow	بسيط Simple	امرية Imperative	

(Rasol, 2014, pp. 87-166; Salim, 2012, pp. 93-94 & Ali and Muneeb, 2016, pp. 85-119)

#### **14. Results**

In this study, it has been found out that negation of words and phrases is a feature shared by the three languages under examination but this feature differs from language to language parametrically.

In both English and Kurdish, words are negated by affixes or by placing “not” before the verbs which, in themselves, do not refer to time. In Arabic, words are negated by adding such words as لا , ليس , لم , etc.. which indicate time. Kurdish verbs are negated by the morpheme (نه) in three time aspects, viz., present, past and future, and the morpheme (نا) is used to negate sentences in the present and future. The morpheme (مه) is used to negate the future sentence denoting the imperative mood. It is found out that the morpheme (نه) is the commonest morpheme used in negation in Kurdis.

#### **15. Recommendations**

Teachers of English, Arabic and Kurdish in the Iraqi context are advised to have a good linguistic knowledge of the three languages under examination. They should, when teaching, focus on those aspects that are not part of the students' native language as they are certainly more problematic areas than other areas which are part of their mother tongue. Since language learning is habit formation, then more emphasis should be placed on those new aspects until they become deep-rooted habits.

## References

- Ali, Shirzad Sabri & Muneeb, Araz (2016). Morphology. Nalband Press. Erbil
- Al-Wahab, Abbas; Al-Jumaili Abdullatif; Nasif, Shakir & Sabri
- Fatima (1989). English Grammar for Student Teachers. Ministry of Education Printing Press.
- Aziz, Yowell Y. (1967). The Influence of English Grammar, Syntax, Idiom and Style upon Contemporary Literary Arabic. Ph.D. Thesis. University of St. Andrews.
- Aziz, Yowell Y.9 (1989). A Contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic. Higher Education Press. Iraq.
- Hamash, Khalil I. (1980). A Course of General English. The Language Book. IDELTI.
- Hamza, Aziz (1974). The Historical Developments of the English Language. Al-Ma'arif Press. Baghdad.
- Hartman, R. R. K. & Stork, F. C. (1976). Dictionary of Language and Linguistics. Applied Science Publishers, Ltd. England.
- Horny, A. S. (1974). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford University Press.
- Horny, A. S. (2015). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford University Press.
- Ibo, Vian Ibrahim (2008). Characteristics of the Kurdish Adjective. M.A. Thesis. Duhok University.
- Rasol, Adullah Hussein (1991). Negation in Kurdish Language. General Directorate of Printing in Erbil.
- Rasol, Abdullah Hussein (2014). Grammatical Inflectional Morphemes of verbs. Ph. D. Dissertation. Baghdad University.
- Saleem, Ahmed Muhammed (2013). Arabic and Kurdish Sentence Structure: A Contrastive Study. M.A. Thesis. Faculty of Arabic. Omdurman Islamic University.
- Salim, Zirin Khursheed (2012). Allomorphs in Kurdish. M.A. Thesis. Duhok University.
- Salman, Khalid Hewa (2015). The Language and Politics of Iraq: Kurdistan. Publisher: LAP Lambert Academic.
- Salman, Khalid Hewa (2020). Kurdish Language, Its Family and Dialects. Koya University.
- Seidl, Jennifer (1983). Grammar in Practice. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Logan P. (1960). The English Language. Oxford University Press. London.