A NOTE ON NOT

RYUJIRO HAYASHI

University of Tokyo

1. FACTS ON NOT. First I would like to draw attention to the following data:

(1) a. ?We saw John not dance on the floor.
   b. John was seen not to dance on the floor.
(2) a. ?*We heard the bell not stop ringing.
   b. The bell was heard not to stop ringing.
(3) a. ?I observed Bill not open the door.
   b. Bill was observed not to open the door.

The a-sentences above sound awkward, if not totally unacceptable. Their passive counterparts, on the other hand, are far more readily acceptable.

Bayer (1986: 14) makes an interesting observation.

(4) They say that every time John gets on his bike he falls off, but
   I've seen him not fall off his bike.

The italicized portion above, Bayer says, would be ungrammatical with unmarked intonation. In order for 4 to sound natural, he proceeds, contrastive or emphatic stress is necessary on not or fall or bike.

(5) a. …*I've seen [him not fall off his bike].
   b. … I've seen [him NOT fall off his bike].
(6) a. I've seen him not FALL off his bike.
   b. I've seen him not fall off his BIKE.

(1 indicates the main stress of an unmarked sentence, while capital letters indicate emphatic or contrastive stress.)

As Higginbotham 1983 points out, negation in a perception verb complement (henceforth PVC) attaches very narrowly to a subconstituent of the complement, to form a kind of antonym.1 In 5b, the scope of not is not the bracketed portion as a whole, but the VP fall off his bike. In 6a

1 Higginbotham mentions nothing about negation in passives.

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and 6b, negation has even narrower scope. Natural continuations would be *I've rather seen him GET off his bike and *I've rather seen him fall off his AIRPLANE respectively.

Thus negation in PVCs sounds odd in an unmarked context. Hence the judgement on 1-3a. Then why are the b-sentences much better than the a-sentences in 1-3? 1-3b seem to be acceptable without marked stress. Bayer attempts to explain the facts of 5 and 6 entirely in terms of semantics, appealing to the notion 'event expression'. But, if the phenomenon at issue is utterly semantic, why the difference in acceptability between the active and the passive? This squib tries to show that the principle that rules the occurrence of not does not altogether fall under semantics.

The same is the case with the causative verb complement, another construction taking the bare infinitive.

(7) a. *I made John not come.
    b. John was made not to come.

Note also the following:

(8) a. *They made John not attend the party.
    b. They forced John not to attend the party.

(9) a. *They let him not go to school.
    b. They allowed him not to go to school.

(10) a. *I'll have him not help you with your homework.
    b. I'll get him not to help you with your homework.

Again the a-sentences are awkward unless with contrastive or emphatic stress, while the b-sentences sound much better even in unmarked contexts. This difference cannot be attributed to any semantic factors, since the intended meaning of the a-sentence is almost equivalent to what the b-sentence means in each pair.

Now let us consider other cases where negation is awkward, if not ungrammatical. The following are from Culicover (1976: 126–27).

(11) a. John has not deliberately not paid his taxes for at least two years.
    b. You simply can't not take advantage of this offer.

2 Some linguists (e.g. Declerck 1983b) claim that (a) and (b) in 1-3 are not exactly related to each other, arguing that the bare infinitive denotes direct perception and the to-infinitive indicates indirect perception. However, I assume here that (b) is indeed the passive counterpart of (a). Notice the non-existence of *I observed Bill (not) to open the door.
c. Charley wouldn't have not seen the money if he had been looking for it.

(12) a. What John did was (to) not leave the door open.
   b. What Mary will do will be (to) not read a book.
   c. What John wants to do is (to) not sleep all day.
   d. What Mary will be doing will be not feeding the pigeons.

According to Culicover, the above examples are awkward, but appear to be grammatical nevertheless.

It seems that the sentences in 11 and 12 all sound fairly good if they are read with emphatic stress on not or some other word within the VP but would be felt clumsy if read with unmarked intonation. What is important is that in cases like these not is attached to VP in phrase structure, or, in Culicover's terms, is a constituent of VP. In such cases, negation cannot affect the whole sentence. Its scope is limited within the VP. This is an instance of what Klima 1964 refers to as 'constituent negation' contrasted with 'sentence negation'.

Quirk et al. (1985: 797–98) also show the following instances where not the clause but the verb phrase is negated.

(13) a. They may not go swimming.
   (=They are allowed not to go swimming.)
   b. You can (simply) not obey the order.
   (=It's possible for you not to obey the order.)

(14) a. I can't not obey her.
   (= It's not possible for me not to obey her.)
   b. You can't not admire him.
   (=It's not possible for you not to admire him.)

(15) a. She didn't not like them.
   (=She didn't dislike them.)
   b. They don't often not remember her birthday.
   (=They don't often fail to remember her birthday.)
   c. He hasn't ever not understood a lecture.
   (=He hasn't ever failed to understand a lecture.)

According to Quirk et al., such sentences occur only 'very rarely' and 'with a special emphatic pause before not (indicated above by 1)'.

We have seen that not attached to VP seems to have some peculiarity. On the other hand, when the negative word is attached to Aux node, the scope of negation can be the whole S (sentence negation). It is held that not is introduced to the phrase structure by the following PS rule.
(16) S → NP Aux (not) VP

Infinitival to is, I assume, one expansion of Aux.

(17)

\[
\text{Aux} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{Tense (Modal)} \\ \text{to} \end{array} \right. 
\]

Therefore, each of the b-sentences above (1-3 and 7-10) can be viewed as equipped with the site for sentence-negational not (=Aux). Thus, unlike the a-sentences, negation affects the whole complement S rather than VP alone. As a result, the b-sentences sound natural without marked stress.

It is well known that the present subjunctive that-clause widely accepts negation.

(18) a. It is essential that this mission not fail. (Quirk et al. 1985: 156)

b. I insist that John not come so often.

c. It is necessary only that the glottis not be wide open.

d. He expressed the hope that the fact that he was an American citizen not be announced.

e. I prefer that I not be asked to do the work. (b–e, Chiba 1987)

These sentences, unlike the bare infinitive construction, do not seem to be awkward or require marked intonation or special context. Thus negation in 18 is sentence negation, which fact suggests that each sentence contains an empty Aux node for not to attach. Let us suppose that the following PS rule exists.3

(19)

\[
\text{Aux} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{Tense (Modal)} \\ \text{SUBJ} \\ \text{to} \end{array} \right. 
\]

Present subjunctives select SUBJ in 19, which is realized as zero or should. It is important to note that subjunctive clauses do have the node Aux which bare infinitive complements lack. Since not can attach to (phonologically empty) Aux in subjunctives, sentences in 18 are well-formed as instances of sentence negation. In PVCs, on the other hand, there is no Aux node for sentence-negational not to hang from. While

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3 Chiba’s (1987: 108) rule \((\text{Aux} \rightarrow \text{Tense}^{\text{Modal}} \text{SUBJ})\) would, contrary to fact, permit Do Support in the subjunctive since Tense would stand alone in Aux, SUBJ being null in the surface. Hence it should be modified into 19.
the negative form of the present subjunctive is roughly 20a, that of the bare infinitive complement is 20b.

(20) a. 
\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\text{NP} \\
\phi \\
\text{not} \\
\text{Aux} \\
\text{VP}
\end{array}
\]

b. 
\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{not} \\
\text{VP}
\end{array}
\]

Thus, although the subjunctive and the bare infinitive are alike in that they take no tense marker or auxiliary elements, they should be assigned different internal structures. Otherwise we would have no way to account for the difference in acceptability or naturalness of negation between 1-3a and 18.4

2. IMPLICATION. Linguists do not agree as to the structure of the PVC. But there is, it seems to me, good reason for regarding it as an S.5 One strong piece of evidence is that it permits existential there.

(21) a. I've never seen there be so many complaints from students before.

b. We saw there arise over the meadow a blue haze.

Some linguists (e.g. Williams 1984) regard these examples as marginal. However, even if sentences like 21 are rather exceptional, it is due to a semantic reason. As Declerck (1983a: fn. 4) points out, while there-insertion generally occurs with stative verbs (mostly with be), PVCs only exceptionally take stative verbs because of some semantic constraint. Thus, even though there are not so many instances of there in PVCs, one should take it that, syntactically, pleonastic there is possible in these constructions.

It is assumed in many recent works that S is the maximal projection of Infl in English. If one considers the PVC as an S and accepts the assumption that Infl is the head of S, then one would have to postulate the following structure including a zero Infl.6

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4 There is a possibility to distinguish between the bare infinitive and the present subjunctive by claiming that both have Aux but that the former's Aux contains [−Tense] and the latter's Aux contains [+Tense] (See Chiba 1987: 109). However, such a claim would have to give a principled reason why not is compatible with [+Tense] but is not with [−Tense].

5 For discussions, see Kirsner and Thompson 1976, Barss 1985, among others. Barss also raises a (rather conceptual) argument that the PVC lacks Infl (=Aux).

Since Infl is assumed to be an element consisting of tense and agreement elements and modals (Chomsky 1986a: 160–61), we identify it with traditional Aux. We saw in the previous section that the PVC should be viewed as lacking Aux rather than having a zero Aux. The structure 22 for a PVC runs counter to this. Chung and McCloskey 1987 argue that at least in modern Irish the so-called small clause has no empty Infl and is not a projection of any category. They propose the following exocentric construction for the structure of S.

Discussion of the preceding section has suggested that 23 is a plausible structure for PVCs (or perhaps for all small clauses, or even for all Ss) in English.

Recently generative grammarians have been eager to extend the spirit of X-bar theory to non-lexical categories, assuming that S is the maximal projection of Infl and S' is a projection of Comp (Stowell 1981, Chomsky 1986b, etc.). Sticking to this assumption, linguists tend to postulate a null Infl and a null Comp without much empirical ground. But notice that having an empty node and having no node at all are two different things, as reflected by the contrast between the bare infinitive construction and the present subjunctive construction. Observations on the occurrence of not in this squib suggest that, before postulating a zero node, empirical research is necessary to see if there are enough grounds to do so.

REFERENCES


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