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USE AND FORM OF ENGLISH NEGATIVE PREFIXES

For a general study on English negative prefixes, J. Tournier's views (1985: 71-106), particularly Chapter II, may prove helpful in an approach dedicated to this lexicogenic process. If the study is restricted to the negative affixes attached to a non-predicative notion, a discrepancy between the great amount of negative prefixes and the only genuinely negative suffix (-*less*) would be noticeable.

Negative prefixes can be subcategorized into the following subclasses, according to both the type of opposition in which notion *A* is engaged and the perception of the referent:

a) *non- (A)*, marking the exteriority of notion *A*;

b) *un-*, *il-*, *ir-*, *in-*, *dis-*, *a-*, marking the absence of quality *A*, i.e. the opposite of *A* (static opposition);

c) *anti-*, *counter-*, *contra-*, marking an antagonism towards notion *A* (active opposition);

d) prefixes with negative connotation:

- *mal-*, *mis-*, *pseudo-*, *under-*, known as pejorative prefixes, conveying a depreciative judgement. The referent is perceived as not having a sufficient number of the notion properties.

- *mini-* is considered a diminutive, as it emphasizes the low degree of the notional characteristics attributed to the referent.

a) *Non*-, is a prefix of Latin origin, a nominalization of the negative adverb *not* and can be attributed the following characteristics:

- *non - A* signifies the exclusion of the notional field *A*.

- *non - A* belongs to the linguistic counterpart of *A*.

It can be either:

- the simple fact of not belonging to the class:

(1) *You are a non-member and I am afraid you will have to pay an extra charge.*

or

- a depreciative judgement: the exclusion of the class because the referent does not have the necessary qualities:

(2) *The meeting was just a non-event.*

A) Examples of *non-belonging to the class* are listed below:

NON-
-ability, -abstainer, -acceptance, -accomplishment, -addict, -adherence, -admission, -aggression, -alignment, -appearance, -arrival, -astronaut, -attendance, -availability, -believer, -belligerent, -black, -claim, -combatant, -combustion, -commitment, -communicant, -completion, -compliance, -conductibility, -conformist, -conformity, -contradiction, -conviction, -cooperation, -creditor, -dealer, -depositor, -entity, -exercise, -existence, -feasance, -filter etc.

B) Depreciative judgement expressed by prefixing '*NON-* to a nominal base finds its best representatives in the list suggested by Bauer (1983: 283-284):

-action   *-book*   *-country*
-actor   *-campaign*   *-course*
-answer   *-case*   *-crime* etc.
-architecture   *-communicating*
-art   *-communication*
-author   *-conclusion*

b) The prefixes *un-*, *in-*, *ir-*, *il-*, *dis-*, *a-* indicate a greater or lesser absence of *A*, the notional characteristic. The compound word thus formed is separated from the attracting centre made up of high degree defining features of notion *A*, which functions as a reference value. This separation can be of a greater or lesser degree, gradation which could not have been possible in the case of the prefix *non-*:

(3) *Such rash decision showed some unawareness of the issue.*
(4) *He is somewhat un-American.*
(5) *He is *somewhat non-American.*

Non- places the speaker outside the notional field. There is no need to specify the degree of remoteness. *Un-* places the speaker inside the notional field, but on the opposite side to the attracting centre, serving as a reference point. Hence, it is not inappropriate to specify remoteness:

(6) *A Buddhist is a non-Christian but only a Christian can be said to be rather or quite un-Christian in behaviour.*

The same applies to (4), in which the subject *he* is perceived as being American, even if his behaviour might suggest the opposite.

Un- is a prefix of Saxon origin, often referred to as a privative prefix and indicates the absence of a quality. It is also a very productive prefix as can be seen from the list below (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-amiability   *-chastity*   *-controllableness*
-aptness   *-concern*   *-conventionality* etc
-awareness   *-conformity*
-certainty   *-congeniality*
-changeableness   *-constraint*

In-, a prefix of Latin origin, also known as privative, indicates the absence of a quality. It is also a very productive prefix (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-ability, -accessibility, -accuracy, -acquaintance, -action, -activity, -adaptability, -adequacy, -adequateness, -admissibility, -advertence, -advisability, -alienability, -alterability, -appetence, -applicability, -application, -appositeness, -appreciation, -aptitude, -articulacy, -articulateness, -attention, -attentiveness, -calculability, -capability, -capacitation, -capacity, -cautiousness, -certitude, -cessantness, -civility etc.

Il- is a morpho-phonological variant of *in-*, before *l* (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-legality	-licitness	-logicalness etc.
-legibility	-limitableness	
-legitimacy	-literacy	
-liberality	-logicality	

Im- is a morpho-phonological variant of *in-*, before *m* (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-maculacy	-measurability	-modesty
-maculateness	-measurableness	-morality
-materialism	-miscibility	-mortality
-materialist	-mobility	-movability
-materiality	-mobilization	-movableness
-matureness	-moderateness	-mutability etc.
-maturity	-moderation	

Ir- is a morpho-phonological variant of *in-*, before *r* (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-rationalism	-religion	-resoluteness
-rationality	-religiousness	-resolution
-reconcilability	-removability	-responsibility
-reducibility	-reparability	-responsiveness
-reducibleness	-reparableness	-retentiveness
-refutability	-repressibility	-retrievability
-regularity	-repressibleness	-reverence
-relevance	-resistibility	-revocability etc.
-relevancy	-resistibleness	

Dis- is a privative prefix of Latin origin, indicating the absence of the notion it precedes (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):
-ability, -accord, adjustment, -advantage, -affectedness, -affection, -affiliation, -affirmation, -agreeableness, -agreement, -alignment, -allowance, -approbation, -approval, -armament, -arrangement,
-array, -articulation, -belief, -comfort, -composure, -connectedness, -connection etc.

A- is a privative prefix of Greek origin that indicates the absence of the notion it precedes. It is used in the medical, scientific or philosophical terminology. Variants: *A(b)-*, *A(n)-*: *abiogenesis, abiotrophy, ablactation, abnormality, abnormity, ametria, amoralism, amusia, amyelia, amyxia, anacusia, anaphia, anhidrosis etc.*

c) Prefixes denoting antagonisms
Anti- is a prefix of Greek origin, indicating an active opposition, an opposite action or an inhibitory / annoying property (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-Freudism	-Semitism	-biogram
-German	-acid	-body
-Jacobin	-aircraft	-cathode
-Semite	-attrition	-catholic

-christ
-christianism
-clericalism
-climax
-cyclone
-dazzle

-dote
-emetic
-febrin
-feminism
-ferment
-freeze

-friction
-gen
-thrombin etc.

Counter- is a prefix of Latin origin, indicating opposition (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-advice
-agent
-approaches
-arch
-argument
-attack

-attraction
-battery
-bond
-brace
-bracing
-chair

-charge
-charm
-check etc.

Contra- is a prefix of Latin origin that indicates opposition. It is not very productive (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):
-diction, -indication, -flow, -position, -tempo

d) Prefixes with negative connotation

Mal- is a prefix of Latin origin which means *bad, poor* (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-adaptation
-administrator
-conformation
-efactor
-evolence
-nutrition
-treatment
-practice

-adjustment
-adroitness
-content
-eficence
-feasance
-observation
-administration

-apropism
-efaction
-eficient
-formation etc.

Mis- means *bad, wrong* (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007:

-adjustment
-adventure
-alignment
-alliance
-anthropy
-application
-appreciation
-apprehension
-appropriation
-behaviour
-belief
-believer
-calculation
-carriage

-chance
-choice
-computation
-conception
-construction
-count
-deal
-deed
-delivery
-demeanour
-description
-direction
-doing
-doubt

-employment
-entry
-esteem
-estimate
-feasance
-fit
-fortune
-government
-guidance
-guidedness
-hap
-information
-interpretation
-joinder etc.

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Pseudo- has the meaning of *false*, only apparently having the properties of the notion it refers to. It is also productive and it can be freely combined with nouns, such as: *pseudo-Christianity, pseudo-classicism, pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-scientist*, to name just a few examples.

Under- expresses the fact that the reference value is not reached, hence the depreciative judgement that goes with it (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2007):

-charge, -developing, -estimation, -excitation, -exposure, -feeding, -footage, -graduate, -inflation, -lighting, -part, -production, -statement, -study, -valuation, -voltage, -world

Mini- has the meaning of *small*. It is also productive and it can be freely combined with nouns. Here are some examples: *mini-bus, mini-car, mini-market, mini-skirt*.

We could also include the restrictive suffixes, such as *semi-*, which indicates that notional properties are only partially acquired: *semi-darkness, semi-detached, semi-invalid, semi-military, semi-official, semi-transparent, semi-tropical* and *sub-*, which, similarly to *under-*, indicates the fact that the reference value is not reached: *sub-assistant, sub-bursar, sub-commissioner, subconscious, subcontractor, sub-culture, subdeacon, subdean, sub-delegate, sub-director, sub-district, sub-editor, sub-embassy, sub-governor, sub-human, sub-inspector, sub-king, sub-lieutenant, sub-man, sub-manager, sub-office, sub-race, sub-rector, sub-shrub, sub-treasurer, sub-tribe*.

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Abstract: Our present paper deals with some aspects of English negative prefixes. Negative prefixes form categories of interrelated senses arranged according to a primary sense. A given negative prefix has multiple senses comprehended in terms of a 'category', a network consisting of a wide range of senses linked via categorising relationships. In terms of the 'category' theory, the senses of a negative prefix gather around a prototypical one, from which the peripheral ones are derived.
Key-words: *negative prefix, primary sense, negative connotation, linguistic counterpar.*