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# The Expansion and Variation of Clausal Multiple Negation across Asian Englishes

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## **Abstract**

Clausal multiple negation is a linguistic structure that entails the coexistence of two or more negative polarity items within the same clause (e.g., *She does not have nothing*). Although the occurrence of this linguistic variant is normally ascribed to the non-standard dialects of the United States and British English (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 846), its presence in other varieties of English remains underresearched. This paper explores the expansion and variation of clausal multiple negation by comparing its occurrence across the forementioned first language (L1) varieties, and the following second language (L2) Asian varieties: Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Singaporean, Malaysian, and The Philippines Englishes. With the exception of The Philippines English, which shows a high frequency of clausal multiple negation, the overall results show a lower frequency of multiple negation in most Asian varieties in comparison with L1 varieties, accounted for by the sociolinguistic constraints of the Asian region.

**Key words:** clausal multiple negation, negative polarity items, non-standard language, Asian Englishes, language variation.

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## 1. Introduction

In English, the occurrence of two or more negative polarity items within the same clause, the so-called clausal multiple negation, is a linguistic structure that has been ascribed to non-standard registers since the first codification of the language. Given that this linguistic variant has generated a great controversy among prescriptivist grammarians, multiple negation has been the focus of different papers in which linguists intended to recover its importance in informal language and its roots in different stages of development of the English language (see Fischer et al. 2000; Nevalainen and Rutten 2012; etc.).

Due to the fact that the presence of such linguistic structure in World Englishes remains underresearched, this paper aims at exploring the expansion of this construction by means of contrasting its occurrence in first language (L1) varieties, mainly British English (BrE) and United States English (USE), and second language (L2) varieties from diverse Asian regions, including Indian (IndE), Bangladeshi (BdE), Sri Lankan (SLE), Pakistani (PkE), The Philippines (PhE), Singaporean (SgE), and Malaysian (MyE) Englishes. Due to the difference between both linguistic statuses, we could hypothesize that multiple negation would be less frequent in L2 varieties than in L1 varieties. With this premise in mind, I intended to identify the sociolinguistic constraints that conditioned this variation and investigate the default morphosyntactic features of this linguistic structure by means of a corpus-based study.

Section 2 offers a theoretical background to the present study by focusing on two fundamental topics. Section 2.1 revises the diachronic evolution of multiple negation from Old English to Present-Day English to understand the informal character that is usually given to this linguistic structure. Following it, Section 2.2 recovers the globalised status of the English language by resorting to some of the theoretical models that exemplify the magnitude of World Englishes and will serve as the theoretical basis for this study.

Section 3 acknowledges the methodology that I have followed to carry out the corpus-based study by introducing the primary and secondary databases and explaining the criteria used for the data selection. This section also describes the manual filtering procedure and the variables that I have selected to conduct the statistical analysis of the overall results, which are objectively presented in Section 4 of this paper.

In Section 5, I will discuss and analyse the results by focusing on three relevant issues for the purpose of this study. While Section 5.1 is devoted to the sociolinguistic constraints that have conditioned the expansion of this linguistic structure, Section 5.2 examines the morphosyntactic variation of multiple negation by exploring the negative contraction *ain't* and

the negative polarity item *never*, two frequent elements in the production of this linguistic structure. In addition, Section 5.3 focuses on the semantic variation of multiple negation considering both the written and the sociolinguistic environment in which it is found.

Finally, Section 6 entails the conclusion of this paper, in which I will summarize the main points of this paper by resorting to the initial hypothesis to figure out its resolution in connection to the results. I will also try to trace the future prospect of this linguistic structure in connection to the field of World Englishes.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 The diachronic evolution of multiple negation in English.**

Although multiple negation is now mainly displayed in non-standard language, this linguistic phenomenon was a default structure in Old and Middle English. After these two periods, the usage of multiple negation began to decline as the language evolved and transformed its structures. With the advancement of eighteenth-century prescriptivism, its use was detached from standard language and minimised to non-standard varieties. Such linguistic norms have perdured throughout history, provoking the stigmatised status of multiple negation in Present-Day English.

The transition and slow disappearance of multiple negation in the English language is commonly illustrated through ‘Jespersen’s Cycle,’ a periodic sequence involving different stages of grammaticalization that explain the evolution of negative concord structures (Nevalainen and Rutten 2012, 263). Initially, negation is accomplished through a single negative marker, which will be combined with another negative polarity item in the second stage of the cycle. Finally, this negative polarity item will be used in isolation to express negation, fossilizing the use of the primitive negative marker (Fischer et al. 2000, 305). These grammatical stages took place in Old, Middle, and early Modern English.

In Old English, the coexistence of various negative polarity items in a clause was starting to arise and will be a major linguistic feature in future stages. Thus, multiple negation was accomplished sentence initially through the combination of a negative head, usually the adverb *ne*, and a second negative polarity item, such as *nalno* or *naht*, which were introduced to create an emphatic effect (Fischer et al. 2000, 309).

During the early stage of Middle English, multiple negation became more complex with the addition of new negative polarity items and the loss of the emphatic *ne*. Even if this negative head was still supported by other negative polarity items, such as *not* or other variants, the



emergence of *any* in implicit negative contexts will precipitate the decline of multiple negation in Late Middle English and Early Modern English (2000, 87-8). Therefore, Middle English can be considered the last exponential period of multiple negation in standard English.

Early Modern English marked the decay of multiple negation and its restriction to non-standard registers in upcoming linguistic periods. With the increase of the occurrence of *any* in certain linguistic contexts, non-assertive items, like *ever* or *anything*, started to replace negative polarity items in sequences that were previously instances of negative concord in Middle English (Nevalainen 2006, 259). This new construction will be retained in the English language, following the negative attraction rule, which “involve[s] the attraction of [a] negative to the ‘indeterminates’ *any*, *ever* and *either*” (Labov 1972, 775). Thus, multiple negation became minorized in certain varieties after the consolidation of eighteenth-century prescriptivist grammar.

Modern English is characterised by the codification and standardization of the English language, which were essential procedures for the development of the current prescriptive norms. As many historical sociolinguistic scholars explain, in the eighteenth century, the advancement of prescriptivism together with the transformation of the English society constructed the language of high social spheres, in which “double negatives became markers of working-class speech” (Nevalainen and Rutten 2012, 266). Due to this stigmatization and the mathematical belief that two negatives comprise a positive, multiple negation was resigned to informal registers up until Present-Day English.

Even though multiple negation is used by many native speakers as part of their everyday speech and thus, it has been widely researched (see Palacios Martínez 2013), 18<sup>th</sup> century prescriptivist norms persist nowadays. As a result, multiple negation is neglected in education because of the informal status and the stigmatisation that prescriptive grammarians relate to it (Curzan 2009, 871-2). In current grammars, it seems to be conceived as an inferior linguistic structure used predominantly in non-standard dialects of the United States and British English (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 846-7). Such statement professes how multiple negation remains extremely prescribed within the current speech community.

Not only has this prescriptivist conception been spread through scholarly productions, but it has also been transmitted unconsciously through traditional media. In films and literature, multiple negation is displayed by minor characters to describe the fringes of society and the uneducated population to support its prescriptivist preconception and spread it in an indirect way (Skóze 2010, 160). Although the future of multiple negation is uncertain, the fact that this

linguistic structure still carries social and racial prejudices with it points towards its exclusive use in non-standard registers of the language.

## **2.2 World Englishes: the global impact of English.**

With the subsequent globalisation and the raise of the United States as a global power, the English language has acquired a *lingua franca* status, as it is normally used in different parts of the world to enable intercultural communication. Although different languages have acquired this status throughout history, the unique and universal character of English has been examined by exploring its exposure at different levels, as an official language, second language and foreign language (Crystal 2003, 5). Due to its globalisation, English is estimated to have nearly 380 million native speakers and a billion non-native speakers approximately (Clyne and Sharifan 2008, 282). As a result, the field of research of World Englishes has grown enormously since the twentieth century, and new concepts and topics of discussion have arisen to contribute to it.

It is widely assumed that the global character of English started to develop with the colonialist expansion of the British Empire in the seventeenth century. In colonial times, colonizers educated indigenous peoples by teaching them their language and other ideological beliefs to immerse them in the British culture, making them “depend on English for their economic and social well-being” (Crystal 2003, 29-30). Even though it seems just a consequence of imperialism at first sight, the subsequent expansion of English is illustrated as an ongoing process that started with colonisation and continued growing in upcoming stages of history, with the decolonisation of the twentieth century or the cultural globalisation of the twenty-first century (Schneider 2014, 9). All those events have enabled English to spread locally in territories in which the British Empire had colonial settlements or in other domains that were not under its control.

Not until these events had occurred, did other factors contribute to the presence of English around the globe as a universal language. Among others, language policies have supported the accomplishment of this globalised status by making its use official and widespread in the outstanding educational, legal, and political sectors globally. With the application of such political means, English has become a koine language, a language that enables communication between different cultures and societies (Del Valle 2023). Hence, the application of such schemes was essential for the evolution of English as a productive foreign language or second language with a substantial speech community.

Due to the diverse and persisting presence of English in different places, scholars have frequently analysed the universal character of the language from a sociolinguistic point of view. Most authors consider English a pluricentric language that undertakes a complex relationship between the national varieties of the language and the secondary ones that have been created through its widespread usage (Clyne and Sharifian 2008, 284). Therefore, scholars, such as Braj Kachru or Edgar W. Schneider, explore this ambiguous relationship by focusing their discussions on peculiar parameters to expand the field of World Englishes and reflect on the diverse use, status, and codification of English globally.

Kachru was the first scholar to come across a categorisation of the native and non-native varieties of English, and he presented them in a cyclical model, the so-called ‘Three Circles’. By examining the role that a given variety fulfils in a certain territory and the “ways in which language has been acquired and is currently used” (Crystal 2003, 60), the linguist recognized the existence of three different linguistic varieties, which were presented as three intertwined circles in his model. While the ‘Inner Circle’ concerns territories in which English was acquired as a first language, the ‘Outer Circle’ is related to multilingual environments where English is used as a second language in the administration or education of the former colonies of the British Empire, like India or Singapore, and the ‘Expanding Circle’ concerns countries in which English functions as a foreign language (60).

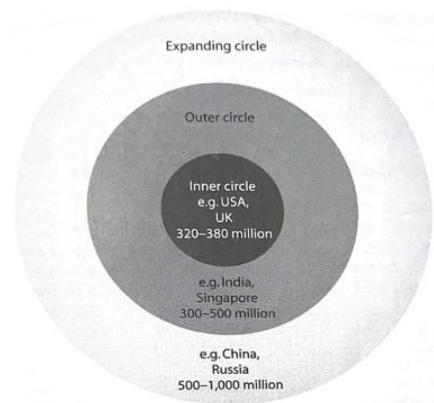


Figure 1: Kachru's ‘Three Circles’ (Crystal 2003, 61)

Thus, the ‘Three Circles’ model presents the worldwide impact of the English language with a particular focus on the non-native community as Kachru intends to demonstrate that “the ‘ownership’ of English has been shifted to the Outer Circle in particular, regarded as ‘norm-developing’” (Schneider 2014, 10). Even if this framework resembles the global character of

the English language, scholars have often condemned its shortcomings and attempted to develop a model that exemplifies the magnitude of the language more precisely. Among others, linguists argue that Kachru did not present an exhaustive description of the features that make up each category neither did he provide an account of all the countries that fit in each circle (Schneider 2007, 14). The scholar Edgar W. Schneider aimed at filling this gap of knowledge by means of proposing the ‘Dynamic Model,’ a framework that illustrates the emergence of Postcolonial Englishes throughout history.

The ‘Dynamic Model’ exemplifies the evolution of the Postcolonial English varieties by presenting their progress as a succession of “characteristic stages of identity rewritings and associated linguistic changes affecting the parties involved in a colonial-contact setting” (2007, 29). To describe this complex linguistic process, the scholar introduced five distinguished stages: *foundation*, *exonormative stabilization*, *nativization*, *endonormative stabilization*, and *differentiation* (32). Each of these five phases include a wide variety of parameters, such as sociolinguistic aspects or the linguistic development, that characterize Postcolonial Englishes during their evolution.

Following Schneider’s parameters, South Asian Englishes exhibit a similar point in progress due to their similar colonial past. There is current belief that South Asian Englishes, namely IndE, SrE, PkE and BdE, are in the *nativization*<sup>1</sup> phase (Gargesh 2006, 90). The Southeast region is much more heterogenous. While MyE is still in the *nativization* phase, SgE and PhE are presenting the first signs of *endonormative stabilization*<sup>2</sup> (Ling 2010, 235; Schneider 2014, 13). Thus, most Asian varieties present a similar stage of development.

Despite being a praised framework in the field of sociolinguistics, the fact that Schneider only included postcolonial varieties of English in the ‘Dynamic Model’ entails some limitations. The ‘Extra- and Intra-Territorial Forces Model’ illustrates the “diverse forms of English world-wide and relates them to each other, not only in terms of development but also with respect to their current status and linguistic forms” (Buschfeld and Kautzsch 2016, 105). With the addition of this new framework, the field of World Englishes seems to be reaching its fulfilment since it contains a wide range of approaches for the analysis of diverse varieties of the language around the world.

1. This central phase involves cultural and linguistic transformations, which precipitate “the emergence of structures distinctive to the newly evolving variety” (2014, 11).

2. In this stage, the identity independence from the ‘mother country’ is manifested through the development of an official codification and the new variety’s grammar (2014, 12).

### **3. Methodology.**

To analyse the prevalence and variation of multiple negation in different varieties of English, a corpus-based study was carried out. Due to the informal character of this linguistic structure (see section 2.1), a corpus containing data of multiple non-standard varieties of English with different linguistic statuses was required to check the expansion of this construction and analyse its main features. As it supplies to all the former requirements, the Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE) was selected as the main database. The GloWbE Corpus was developed by the linguist Mark Davies in 2013 and consists of 1.9 billion texts, collected from a wide variety of online resources and domains from twenty countries around the globe (Davies 2013).

In addition to this corpus, other secondary resources were used to fulfil the present study. The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English (eWAVE) was also considered to select the varieties of English that were going to be analysed. This database provides information about the most frequent morphosyntactic variables present in 77 varieties of English (Kortmann et al. 2020). In relation to multiple negation, this linguistic feature shows a wide range of variation among Asian varieties.

According to eWAVE (2020), multiple negation is attested to be neither pervasive nor extremely rare in PhE, while it is a rare sequence in IndE and absent in SLE, MyE and SgE. In addition, there is no further information of its presence in other varieties, such as BdE and PkE. Since the presence of this linguistic variant has been underresearched in the South and Southeast regions of Asia, where English functions as an L2, this motivated the inclusion of English varieties with an L1 status that influenced Asian Englishes, namely USE and BrE, to conduct a comparative corpus-based study that illustrates the variation of multiple negation among a diversity of English varieties.

One additional database was employed to carry out the discussion of the results. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is one of the largest corpora that exist nowadays and contains one billion words from 1990 to 2019 texts of various genres (Davies 2020). Since this corpus also contains data of non-standard language, some of the input obtained after the analysis of the GloWbE corpus, such as the frequency of verbal auxiliaries, was compared with identical structures that can be found in COCA to obtain an exact and widespread overview of such variables in Present-day English.

### 3.1 Filtering procedure and analysis.

With respect to the examples that have been analysed in this study, the selection was carried out by means of considering a single criterion, the occurrence of clausal multiple negation. This phenomenon is manifested through the coexistence of a negative polarity item, like *never*, and the negative head *not* as in the examples below. With this premise in mind, several formulaic sequences combining *never*, *nothing*, and *no* with *not* or its contracted form were searched in the GloWbE corpus to come up with the relevant examples that present the required grammatical construction in all the selected varieties from South and Southeast Asia, the United States and Great Britain.

- (1). *I've never not been grateful to be an actor* (GloWbE IN).
- (2). *He cannot no longer act as he owns Sri Lanka* (GloWbE LK).
- (3). *There ain't nothing going to make me want to let you go* (GloWbE GB).

	<i>not</i>	<i>n't</i>
<i>never</i>	322	365
<i>nothing</i>	192	361
<i>no</i>	278	-

Table 1: Unfiltered results in GloWbE Corpus

Having selected the formulae, the resulting 1518 grammatical constructions were revised through a manual filtering, which was a crucial select the relevant examples and discard those that do not comply to the subject of this study. Given that GloWbE is a corpus of texts from online sites, which contains song lyrics or colloquial forum discussions, some constructions were repeated several times or appeared to be instances of phrasal multiple negation. Example (4) is found four times in the US variety when searching the formula *n't never*. Repeated sequences were considered as a single example in the compiling process, and instances of phrasal multiple negation, such as the appearance of *not no* in isolation in example (5), were not included as part of the analysis.

- (4). *He's all gone to Indiana, ain't never comin' home* (GlowbE US).
- (5). *Probably not no* (GloWbE GB).

After the manual analysis, the overall number of tokens resulted in a total of 968 grammatical sequences. These were entered into a database and analysed through PSPP, a computer programme that facilitates the development of statistical analysis. For the analysis, I took into account five independent variables. With respect to the sociolinguistic variables, three main factors were considered:

1. the English variety to which the example belonged;
2. the phase of development of that precise variety following Schneider's 'Dynamic Model' (2007);
3. the variety's linguistic status, if it was either an L1 or an L2.

In addition, two morphosyntactic variables were examined:

1. the negative polarity item that was part of such grammatical sequence;
2. the auxiliary verb that preceded the negative construction.

Each of these five factors were relevant to compare the linguistic variation and expansion of clausal multiple negation throughout different varieties of the language and prove the implication of such variability.

## 4. Results.

### 4.1 Overall results.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of multiple negation per variety. The variety that contains the highest number of multiple negation is USE. This variety presents 474 grammatical sequences with that linguistic structure and a normalized frequency of 1,22 per million words. BrE is the second variety with more examples, with a total of 254 cases of multiple negation, although it has a low normalized frequency in comparison to PhE, MyE and SgE. With respect to the other varieties, none of them has more than 100 examples. Within these, PhE illustrates the highest normalized frequency overall and the highest results among all Asian varieties, with an amount of 59 cases of multiple negation. In both SgE and IndE, 39 examples were found. Similarly, MyE features 38 instances and a high normalized frequency. BdE, SLE and PkE varieties exemplify the lowest number of examples, with 20, 22 and 23 cases of multiple negation respectively.

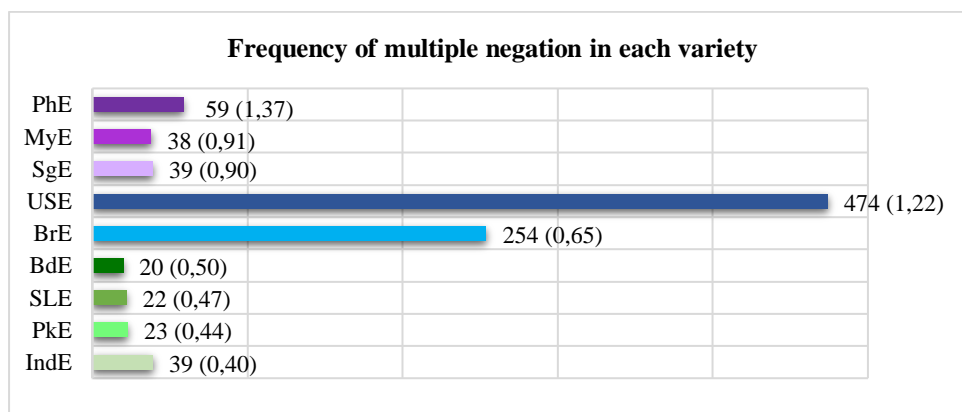


Figure 2: Overall results and normalized frequencies in each variety

## 4.2 Occurrence of multiple negation in each developmental phase.

If we analyse the data according to the phase of development in which the different varieties are found, we observe a similar distribution to Figure 3. As can be observed in Figure 3, linguistic varieties belonging to the *differentiation* phase, namely USE and BrE, represent 75,20% of occurrence of multiple negation overall. However, the *endonormative stabilization* and *nativization* phases, among which the Asian varieties are classified (see Section 2.2), portray smaller percentages, constituting a 10,02% and a 14,77% of recurrence subsequently.

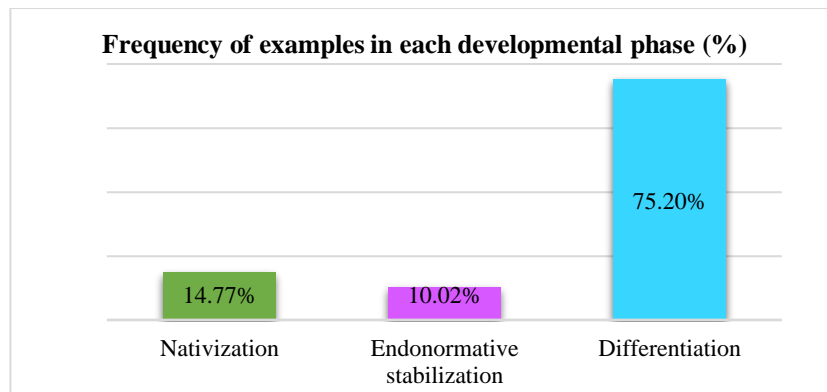


Figure 3: Rate of occurrence in developmental phases

## 4.3 Frequency of negative polarity items.

Figure 4 illustrates the frequency of negative polarity items coexisting with *not* and *n't* in the sample. The most frequent negative polarity item is *never*, which occurs in 498 examples. Regarding *nothing*, it takes place 347 times, being the second most recurrent negative element. Ultimately, *no* is the least frequent negative adverb, appearing in just 123 instances.

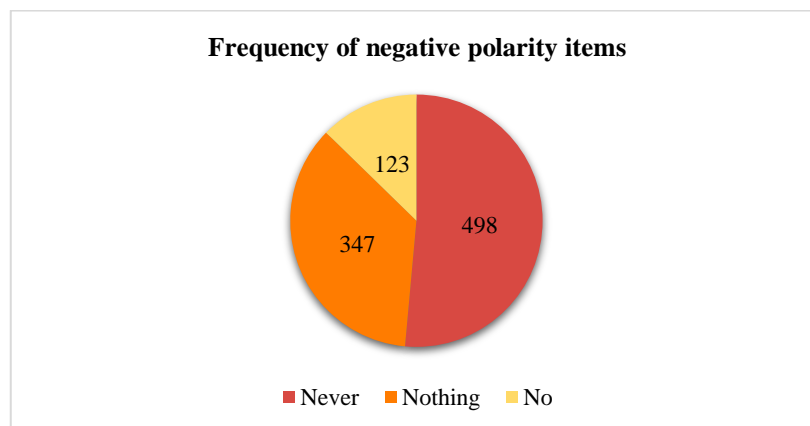


Figure 4: Frequency of negative polarity items



#### 4.4 Rate of occurrence of auxiliary verbs.

Finally, the rate of occurrence of the four main auxiliary verbs is included in Figure 5. Among the four of them, BE occurs in 53,10% of examples, being the most frequent auxiliary to express multiple negation, followed by *have* and the modal verbs, *will* and *could*, which represent a 20,46% and 19,21% rate of frequency overall. The dummy DO occurs only in 7,23% of the sample.

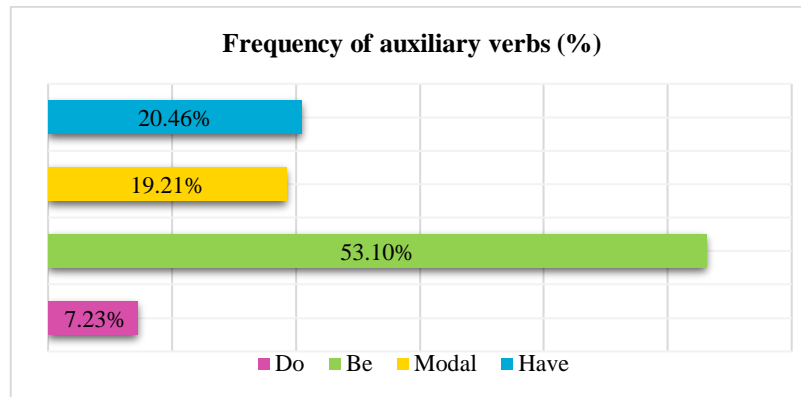


Figure 5: Rate of occurrence of auxiliary verbs

### 5. Discussion.

The forementioned results need to be thoroughly analysed to examine the expansion and variation of multiple negation in non-standard language more in depth. To accomplish this purpose, I have devoted three different sections, focusing on the sociolinguistic constraints that may have conditioned its low occurrence in Asian Englishes, as well as the morphosyntactic and the semantic variation of this linguistic structure.

#### 5.1 Sociolinguistic constraints.

One of the main factors that has conditioned the occurrence of multiple negation in different varieties of the language seems to be the linguistic status of Asian Englishes, since there is a great disproportion between varieties that are labelled as L1s and those that are considered L2s, as Figure 6 exemplifies. Hence, this section will reflect on how the language policies and the contact languages of South and Southeast Asia may have conditioned the frequency of multiple negation.

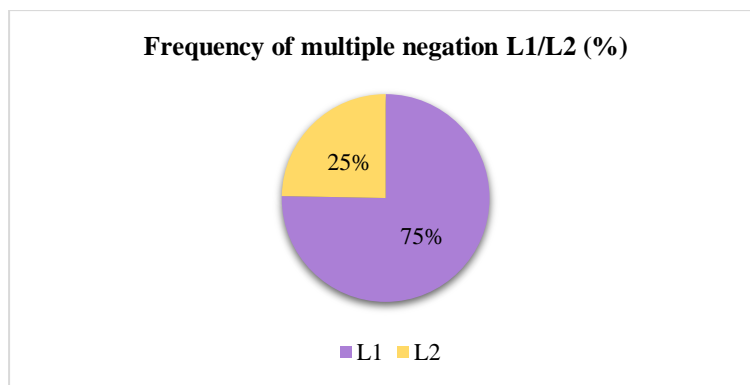


Figure 6: Rate of occurrence in each linguistic status

The South and Southeast regions of Asia are surrounded by a wide-range of contact languages, which belong to four main linguistic branches: the Sino-Tibetan, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and Austronesian languages (Hickey 2009, 560). Out of the seven Asian countries included in this study, India and The Philippines are the two regions with an evident diglossia, with 424 and 175 living indigenous languages accordingly (Eberhard et al. 2023). In such multilingual scenario, contact languages have a notable influence in the non-standard grammatical forms of Asian Englishes (2009, 561). Given that multiple negation is a linguistic structure ascribed to non-standard registers, several sociolinguistic factors might have conditioned its moderate presence.

With the coexistence of such quantity of languages, not only did the introduction of language policies help regulate their usage in education, administration, and legislation, but it also intended to perpetuate the prominent role of English during the colonial independence. Nonetheless, language policies are not homogenous, presenting a disparity between the role of English in the diverse regions of the Asian continent. In South Asia, “English is viewed as a language of power and as a means of economic uplift and upward social mobility” (Gargesh 2006, 90). Even though English coexists within a triglossic situation in Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, the English language preserves the status of an L2 by being used as the main language in prestigious disciplines, like science, technology, and education (92). As a result, the application of language policies in the Southern region seems to have enhanced the preservation of the prestigious character of English, which might restrict the non-standard varieties and colloquial linguistic forms of the language.

Among the four Southern varieties, IndE is the variety that seems to be most influenced by its colonial past. In terms of linguistic normativity, several scholars have pointed out that BrE still serves as an idealised model that influences the grammar and the speech community of India even after independence (Schneider 2007, 171-2). The fact that in Figure 2 IndE shows

the lowest normalized frequency of clausal multiple negation overall exemplifies how British prescriptivism still influences the Indian speech community and how it might have affected the development of non-standard language and the production of clausal multiple negation.

Southeast Asia also presents a convoluted situation because of the colonial divergence between The Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. These two latter countries have a common colonial past as both were British colonies and English instruction was established under the control of the British Empire in colonial times. Despite their colonial convergence, these English varieties have developed individually and exhibit distinct linguistic tendencies in which English plays a major role. SgE is characterised by its linguistic homogeneity because it is used as a *lingua franca* and global language for communication purposes, while MyE exhibits a greater variation with the coexistence of mesolectal, acrolectal and basilectal varieties of the language (Ling 2010, 235).

The Philippines arises a much more complex scene because it was an American colony, and this differentiates it from the other Asian regions. When The Philippines became an American colony at the end of the nineteenth century, the United States promoted English instruction by sending teachers from America to the settlement (Hickey 2009, 575). The fact that language instruction was favoured has encouraged scholars to suggest that current “beliefs and attitudes about English, as well as the various ways in which language is used, are products of the Filipino experience of American colonial education” (Pefianco Martin 2010, 247). Thus, the American influence on present-day PhE could be a major aspect that has favoured the high occurrence of multiple negation in this Asian variety.

Despite the colonial and linguistic variation that these seven Asian regions exhibit, the establishment of language policies enabled the preservation of English as an L2 and the development of new varieties in contact with other languages, which may have conditioned the low occurrence of multiple negation in some varieties. Therefore, the phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence, often described as the impact that the core knowledge of one or several mother tongues has on the acquisition of an L2, seems to be relevant for the discussion of this matter (James 2012, 858). To explore the cross-linguistic influence that Asian contact languages had on some Asian Englishes, I will discuss the grammatical features of negation of the Dravidian languages, Malay, and Sinhala.

The Dravidian languages account for 85 languages, some of which are present in South Asia (Eberhard et al. 2023). In these languages, negative polarity is accomplished through diverse negative allomorphs or inflections. For instance, the usage of the negative verbal suffix *-a* or the verbal allomorphs *\*al-* ‘to be not so’ or *\*il-* ‘to be not’ is required to express negation

(Krishnamurti 2003, 353-4). Similarly, Malay accomplishes clausal negation by means of *tara* and *bukang*, two negators that usually precede the subject and negate the whole predicate (Litamahuputty 2012, 222). In both cases, negative elements do not seem to co-occur to express negation and thus, multiple negation is not a salient linguistic structure in the standard register of these Asian languages.

The case of Sinhala, the official language of Sri Lanka, entails some differences. Negation is semantically oriented, since the addition of negative markers or particles changes or adds new implicated meanings to the whole clause (Chandralal 2010, 265). However, there are peculiar cases in which the colloquial negative particle *yae* may coincide with another negative polarity item within the same clause, cancelling the negative meaning and emphasizing the positive polarity (267). Even though there is evidence of the coexistence of two negative elements in Sinhala, clausal multiple negation has the contrary semantic effect in English, which may lead to semantic variation.

On the whole, the lack of occurrence of clausal multiple negation in Asian contact languages is a key factor to understand its low frequency in non-standard varieties of Asian Englishes. The sociolinguistic constraints and the L2 linguistic status of Asian Englishes seem to be limiting the exhibition of multiple negation in most cases and thus, they are essential to understand the limits of this linguistic structure.

## **5.2 Morphosyntactic variation.**

In this section, I will revise some of the salient morphosyntactic features of multiple negation to achieve a wider analysis of its variation. The negative contraction *ain't* and the negative polarity item *never* will be discussed by means of considering previous scholarly reflections on the matter (see Palacios Martínez 2013).

Following the results presented in section 4.4, *BE* and *have* are the most frequent auxiliary verbs in the production of multiple negation. These two auxiliaries share a common form, the negative contraction *ain't*, which occurs in 309 instances overall. Due to its variation in non-standard language and its importance in the field of multiple negation, *ain't* will be discussed by considering its lexical meaning, the type of sentences in which it occurs and its role in non-standard varieties.

The negative contraction *ain't* can stand as a form of two different lexical verbs: *HAVE* or *BE*. As a form of *HAVE*, *ain't* “is essentially limited to cases where the verb functions as an auxiliary, either in combination with *got* or in the expression of perfect aspect” (Palacios

Martínez 2013, 214). In GloWbE, *ain't* occurred as a form of HAVE in 104 of the cases, mostly accompanying perfect tenses as in sentence (6). On the contrary, *ain't* stands for BE in relation to continuous and present tenses, like in example (7). Out of 309 clauses containing this auxiliary, 205 examples include *ain't* as a form of BE.

(6). *You ain't never had a party* (GloWbE IN).

(7). *You ain't never gonna finish this process* (GloWbE GB).

The significant occurrence of *ain't* also presents some syntactic aspects worth highlighting. Even though this negative contraction usually appears within existential constructions in cases of clausal multiple negation (2013, 215), the existential *there* functioned as a subject in just 14 cases. As a matter of fact, most examples have personal pronouns, such as *you*, *I* or *we*, functioning as their subject because, in non-standard language, noun phrases or existential constructions seem to be less frequent in subject position, as in examples (8) and (9). Thus, the linguistic environment seems to condition the syntax of certain examples.

(8). *My baby ain't never hurt nobody!* (GloWbE US).

(9). *There ain't never been anybody else here* (GloWbE US).

Although the contraction *ain't* is not restricted to cases of multiple negation exclusively, it has a recurrent role in the assertion of this non-standard structure in USE, BrE, PhE and IndE. As scholar Palacio Martínez acknowledges, *ain't* is part of the British working-class slang, whereas in the United States, this negative contraction is widely used in colloquial language (2013, 213). Due to this, PhE and IndE, the Asian varieties that have been most influenced by USE and BrE respectively, show a high occurrence of the negative contraction *ain't*, with 27 and 15 occurrences respectively. Conversely, other varieties, such as BdE, SLE and PkE, lack this auxiliary as they seem to rely on the default auxiliaries.

To explore the significance of *ain't* in more depth, the unfiltered occurrence of the contraction in isolation in the USE variety has been compared to its frequency in COCA from 2015 to 2019. The fact that COCA presents 8807 million examples of *ain't* within the forementioned period acknowledges how its use is emerging in Present-Day English. Therefore, *ain't* seems to be a major auxiliary that engages in the production of clausal multiple negation and other grammatical constructions in different varieties of English across the world.

	COCA	GloWbE
<b>Raw frequency (M)</b>	8807	9845
<b>Normalized frequency</b>	71,75	25,45

Table 2: Unfiltered occurrence of *ain't*

Apart from this auxiliary contraction, the negative polarity item *never* also exhibits a high frequency and presents morphosyntactic variation in its features. Hence, I will explain the diverse grammatical uses of the negative adverb *never* to approach its linguistic repercussion and understand its impact on the production of multiple negation.

Many grammarians have acknowledged the complexity of *never* as a negative polarity item that can imply two different meanings according to the connotation of the clause in which it occurs (see Cheshire 1995). With this premise in mind, “*never* is very frequently used to express universal temporal negation [...], [but] it can also convey negation to a specific point in time in the past” (2013, 220). Following example (10), the meaning of *never* as a universal negator is normally accomplished in combination with perfect tenses. Conversely, when *never* occurs with the simple past, it usually expresses specific negation as in sentence (11).

(10). *I have never not been asked back* (GloWbE GB).

(11). *We were never not on speaking terms* (GloWbE GB).

In addition to these two common uses of *never*, there is another meaning related to this negative polarity item. Although not many linguists or grammars include the following case as part of its uses (Cheshire 1995, 75-6), *never* can also function as a specific negator in relation to the future when it occurs with *will* or the present continuous like in examples (12) and (13). Overall, the fact that *never* entails a wide variety of meanings when it coexists with the negative polarity item *not* could explain its high frequency in GloWbE (see Section 4.3).

(12). *You'll never not be my girl* (GloWbE PH).

(13). *I ain't never gonna turn around* (GloWbE SG).

To explore the significance of this negative polarity item in multiple negation, I will acknowledge its occurrence in different varieties of English. USE and BrE exhibited the highest frequencies with 239 and 131 examples of *never* each, and PhE and IndE also show a high occurrence of this negative polarity item in 34 and 21 examples respectively. Out of all Asian varieties, MyE show the most unexpected results. Although in this variety *never* is said to occur as a preverbal past tense negator (Kortmann et al. 2020), this negative polarity item mostly acts as a preverbal future negator in the production of multiple negation as in examples (14) and (15). This case exemplifies how standard features of negative polarity might change when they are exposed to non-standard language.

(14). *You just won't never see Amber with this girl* (GloWbE MY).

(15). *Those who only work with their corrupted mind won't never change* (GloWbE MY).

To conclude with the analysis of *never*, the morphosyntactic variation of this negative polarity item could have also been conditioned by the type of negation under study. Even though it is frequently used as a specific negator in the past in non-standard registers (Palacios Martínez 2013, 221), this negative polarity item occurs as a universal negator in 43,2% of the sequences and as a specific negator of the future in 43,6% of cases of multiple negation. Since the occurrence of *never* as a specific negator in the past in instances of multiple negation only entails a rate of 13,2%, this function seems to be exclusively associated to standard negation.

### 5.3 Semantic variation.

The emphatic effect of multiple negation has been one of the major aspects that linguists have examined exhaustively given that some prescriptivists grammarians have argued that negatives cancel each other out (Curzan 2009, 871). Nonetheless, there is evidence on the cumulative and emphatic effect of this type of negation, as speakers often use multiple negation as a device to “make their strongest points stronger” (Labov 1972, 804). This linguistic structure seems to be less frequent in writing because it is more difficult to express emphasis in written expression. As a result, people tend to use special characters or fonts to produce this effect and mimic oral speech. Overall, capitalizing either both negative polarity items or just one of them, like in sentences (16), (17), and (18), might be one of the most common strategies to highlight and put emphasis on negation in non-standard written varieties.

(16). *I have NEVER NOT paid income taxes* (GloWbE US).

(17). *I'm 24 and have never NOT had a dog* (GloWbE US).

(18). *We are NEVER not communicating* (GloWbE GB).

Not only is the emphatic effect of multiple negation affected by the written environment in which this investigation is based, but its meaning may also vary between different English varieties. As seen previously in Section 5.1, in Sinhala, the coexistence of negative polarity items reverses the negative emphasis and transforms it into a positive meaning. Following this evidence, sentences (19) and (20) can have a positive meaning in SLE because of its contact with Sinhala. As a result, due to the great influence that contact languages have in these varieties, clausal multiple negation may be subject to semantic variation in Asian Englishes.

(19). *One cannot never guarantee that the inmates would rise up again* (GloWbE LK).

(20). *I can't never forget my Primary Mentor, Gaurav Paliwal* (GloWbE LK).

## 6. Conclusion.

Following the initial hypothesis, this paper has explored the sociolinguistic factors that have conditioned the expansion of multiple negation in Asian Englishes and the morphosyntactic features that have determined its variation across L1 and L2 varieties. By focusing on these variables, I intended to acquire a wider perspective of the occurrence of clausal multiple negation in Asian Englishes.

As seen in Sections 4 and 5, clausal multiple negation seems to be arising as a new linguistic structure in some of the Asian varieties. Overall, PhE showed a high normalized frequency in comparison to the BrE or USE due to the educational and linguistic impact that the United States had over The Philippines during colonisation and after independence. Although SgE and MyE also show a high occurrence of this linguistic structure, their connection to BrE could have limited the development of multiple negation. Similarly, South Asian Englishes, specially IndE, showed a lower frequency because of the sociolinguistic constraints and the British influence that they still present. These varieties could also be conditioned by their developmental phase. As a result, colonial influence and language contact were recognized as the main factors that have limited the expansion of clausal multiple negation in the Asian region.

These two factors have also affected the morphosyntactic and semantic variation of this linguistic variant in Asian Englishes. The colonial influence that BrE and USE still have over IndE and PhE was a major aspect that conditioned the occurrence of the negative contraction *ain't* and the negative polarity item *never* in the production of clausal multiple negation in these varieties. Likewise, language contact can also contribute to the semantic variation of this linguistic structure because Sinhala has the reverse perception of the standard pragmatic effect that is normally ascribed to multiple negation in English. Thus, multiple negation is affected by different types of variation in the Asian region.

Given that clausal multiple negation is starting to arise in some Asian Englishes, this could point towards the emergence of this linguistic structure in other non-standard varieties of English. Hence, the occurrence of clausal multiple negation needs to be studied more in depth to capture the real magnitude of multiple negation across World Englishes and understand the sociolinguistic constraints that are slowing or conditioning its expansion.



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