

AN ACCOUNT OF THE NEGATIVENESS OF THE CONSTRUCTIONS 'FAR FROM' AND /baʔīdun ʔan/ IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC

**By: Lecturer
Haleem H. Falih
College of Arts
University of Basrah**

ABSTRACT

This paper calls for the necessity for treating and incorporating the constructions 'far from' in English and /baʔīdun ʔan/ in Arabic as negative markers of the same quality as that of no, not, never, mā, lā, laysa, ... etc. It presents sufficient evidence to the effect that these forms do share the same semantic denotation with the other negative markers of both languages as well as having some of the syntactic qualifications and properties that qualify an item to be considered as a negator.

ملخص البحث

تدعو هذه الورقة الى إعتبار وأعتماذ التركيبين (for from) في اللغة الانكليزية و (بعيد عن) في اللغة العربية على أنهما أداتا نفي مثلهما مثل الأدوات ، no ، not ، never ، ما ، لا ، ليس ، ... الخ. وتقدم الورقة أدلة كافية على أن هذين التركيبين يشاركان بقية أدوات النفي في كلا اللغتين التعبير عن نفس المعنى الدلالي، إضافة الى إمتلاكهما بعض المواصفات والخصائص التركيبية التي تؤهل أية مفردة لكي تعتبر أداة نفي.

I. Negation is a concept that falls within the domains of logic, philosophy and linguistics. It is a linguistic phenomenon and a device which seems to be employed by all natural languages(1) to express (or convey) a number of such meanings as negativeness, denial, oppositeness, contradiction, and the like. However, despite its being so common and so widely-used in language, negation has turned out to be so intricate, complicated and highly controversial a subject that it would not lend itself to any comprehensive investigation or systematic analysis. Part of the problem in handling this linguistic phenomenon lies, it seems, in the fact that there has been no one-to-one correspondence between the logical system of negation and the linguistic one (cf. Lyons, 1981:132; Jespersen, 1968:331). But, much of the trouble in tackling negation seems to spring from the fact that, within linguistics, negation is (and has to be treated as) a syntactico-semantic category; it is so in the sense that (a) negation is a semantic as well as being a syntactic concept, and (b) there is always a correlation between syntax and semantics in the application of the negation transformation rule. That is, in addition to being formally negated (by having some negative marker incorporated in it), a syntactically negative sentence must, by definition, express or imply some negative meaning as denial, oppositeness,...etc. In this respect, negation looks somewhat different from other similar syntactic devices such as interrogation, for example. For, when applied to a declarative sentence, the question-formation (i.e. the Inversion) transformation rule will generate a syntactically interrogative sentence. But a sentence so derived does not have always to mean a question that needs to be answered, as is revealed by the following examples:

- (1) Would you mind not smoking in here, please?
- (2) Won't you leave me alone?

Syntactically, these are interrogative sentences, but from the semantic point of view they are not meant to 'ask', nor are they uttered to seek an answer; rather, they are intended to convey the meanings of 'request' and 'order' respectively. A negative sentence, by comparison, must maintain the correlation between syntax and semantics; it has to be both syntactically (i.e. formally) and semantically negative. Hence, negation has to be approached as a two-faced linguistic phenomenon which could hardly ever be accounted for in a purely syntactic or purely semantic account. For, in any grammatical analysis, including negation, what is needed is

"an analysis that is formal in the sense that it illustrates formal regularities and can be justified formally in that formal evidence is always available, but also semantic in the sense that it relies on obvious semantic clues for some of its categorization and also that it accounts for semantic features that correlate with formal distinctions" (Palmer, 1974:7).

It follows from this that for a particular item to be admitted as a negative marker or particle, it has to denote or imply some negative meaning in addition to exhibiting certain syntactic characteristics which are peculiar to such category of words (cf. Quirk et al.,1972:380). To put it another way, a negator is entitled to function as a syntactic-semantic constituent, having some syntactic characteristics as well as conveying or implying some negative meaning. This procedure of adopting a dual principle for the establishment of the negative markers seems quite necessary, if not inevitable, if the negation account is to capture all the possible generalizations relating to negation, and to be brought more in line with logic---which will ultimately make it more adequate, inclusive and highly elaborate.

The present paper seeks, first, to highlight the contradiction, marked in the negation account, of discarding a fully-negating

form such as the construction 'far from' when much less negation-implying items such as 'rarely', 'little', 'only',...etc are treated as negative forms of the same quality as 'not', 'never', 'neither', and the like. It will argue for the requirement of admitting 'far from' as a member of the negative markers, and will supply some evidence to this effect.

As its second aim, or task, the paper will consider, in some detail, an Arabic parallel construction to the English 'far from', i.e. the construction /baʔīdun ʔan/ and its two alternative forms /baʔīdun kullal-buʔdi ʔan/ and /abʔadu mā yakūnu ʔan/ (2), which are similarly used to express the sense of negation. It will look into the semantic implications as well as the syntactic behavior and interactions of these forms. The paper will end up by drawing a comparison between the English form 'far from' and its Arabic counterparts.

II. In English, as elsewhere, negation is a syntactic-semantic phenomenon which can be formally realized by means of any one of the following (among others):

1. Negative Particles, such as not, no, never, neither, ...etc.
2. Lexical items having the feature [+Neg] such as 'scarcely', 'rarely', 'seldom',etc.

Yet, for a sentence to be counted as negative (or negated), according to the scholars of English grammar, it has to pass certain tests which were set up to determine whether a sentence was negative or not. Of these tests the following are only samples:

1. Taq-questions: according to the rules of English grammar, under a falling intonation on the tag, a positive sentence takes a negative tag and a negative sentence has a positive tag, as in:

- (3) a. Brian has handed in his term-paper, hasn't he?
b. Mary looks uncertain about something, doesn't she?
c. He hasn't handed in his term-paper, has he?

d. We have never let any one of you down, have we?

2. Neither-tags: "In order for the second of the two either-conjoined sentences to be truncated into a neither-tag, the first sentence (as well as the second) must be negative" (Stockwell et al., 1973:232-33, and see also Klima, 1964:305), e.g.:

(4) a. I will not go to the party, and neither will Richard.

b. None of my brothers were there, and neither was any of yours.

c. *Ted is unqualified for such a job, and neither is his brother.

The first remark one might make here is that a sentence counts as negative only when it happens to contain the negative particle not (or its contracted form n't) or one of the negative forms no, never, none, neither,...etc. A negative prefix or suffix such as un-, in-, dis-, -less, and the like, would not turn a positive sentence into negative as is demonstrated by (3) b. and (4) c. above. The second observation is that all the tests (which were first set up by Klima and then developed and expanded by Stockwell et al.) are syntactic in nature and are based on certain syntactic considerations---which is to say that the scholars who set them up had built heavily on the syntactic behavior and interactions of the negation markers rather than on their semantic denotation or implications. One of the gravest and most noticeable consequence of such a procedure was that some lexical items such as 'seldom', 'little', 'few', 'only',...etc, (3) (which are, not surprisingly, referred to by these scholars as 'incomplete negatives' (cf. Quirk et al., op cit:223, and Stockwell et al., op cit: 233) had to be allowed a place on the list of the negative words to the exclusion of some other forms which are incomparably much stronger than those in expressing or implying the sense of negation. What is being referred to here is the phrase 'far from'. This construction does, in this idiomatic use, express the sense of negation even more forcefully than

most of the known negative particles in English. In the dictionary, 'far from' is assigned the following meanings: " a very much not; a long way from being; not at all" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1987:368); "not at all sth; almost the opposite of sth." (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1989:439), to mention a few. This is, furthermore, intuitively realized by all native speakers of English. For, if given sentences such as the following:

(5) "...I am far from being hostile to formal semantics". (Lyons, op cit:9)

(6) His account is far from true.

(7) The problem is far from being easy.

to paraphrase, no native speaker would fail to assign them the following readings respectively:

(8) I am not at all hostile to formal semantics.

(9) His account is not at all true.

(10) The problem is not at all easy.

This is to say, in other words, that (8), (9) and (10) are equivalent to (5), (6) and (7), respectively, in meaning.

Now, it appears that what has obliged grammarians and scholars of English grammar to refrain from granting 'far from' a status as a negator is the fact that it seems to lack in most of the characteristics and features of the other negative markers such as not, no, never,...etc. Thus, unlike sentences negated by not, never, none,...etc, a sentence containing 'far from', for instance, is not tagged with a positive tag (which is a concomitant of negative sentences) as in:

* is he?

(11) He is far from being honest, { isn't he?}

* did they?

(12) They looked far from being convinced, { didn't they?}

The fact that a positive tag is starred in this type of context is indicative enough that these sentences are positive rather than negative.

Nor does it stimulate the occurrence of a neither-tag in a conjoined sentence, as in:

neither was Mary.

(13) John was not pleased with your performance and { *so was Mary. }

*neither was Mary.

(14) John was far from being pleased with your performance and { so was Mary. }

But, 'far from' does, nevertheless, share some other features of the negative markers. Thus, it, also, triggers the 'some-any' alternation as do all the other negators of English. For, the some-any suppletion is ascribed to the presence of a deep structure morpheme NEG in the sentence; this morpheme is said to condition the change of 'some' into 'any' (Stockwell et al., op cit:234; Bolinger, 1977:72) as is illustrated in the following examples:

unusual

(15) It is { not usual } for any rain to fall in July. (Klima, op cit:292)

* usual

any one

(16) He seemed far from being interested in { *some one } of my proposals.

anything

(17) She is far from doing { *something } nasty or disgraceful.

While the morpheme NEG which is inherent in the meaning of the negative prefix un- and the negative particle not in (15) above is what has motivated the occurrence of 'any' rather than 'some', in (16) and (17) the presence of the non-assertive forms 'any' and 'anything' respectively has been prompted by the existence of the NEG morpheme which is, also, inherent in the

semantic matrix of 'far from'. This should put 'far from' on a par with the other intrinsically negative (or negating) particles.

In addition, according to the rules of English grammar, the informal quasi-coordinator 'let alone' has always to be preceded by a negative form, as in:

(18) I've not even read the first chapter, let alone finished the book. (Quirk et al., op cit:620).

This same construction seems to go perfectly well with 'far from' as well. In a questionnaire distributed to some members of teaching staff (who are all native speakers of English) of the British Council in Amman, Jordan, all participants have unanimously decided on the grammaticality and acceptability of the following sentence (which was one of six other sentences given in the questionnaire to be checked, cf. Appendix below):

(19) He is always far from being reliable, let alone co-operative.

This was the only sentence on the list which had been accorded unanimous agreement. The fact that (19) could pass as a grammatical sentence with 'let alone' preceded by 'far from' provides another piece of evidence in favour of the status of the latter as a negative marker.

Now it has been noted that "whereas most words and idioms may occur in both affirmative and negative sentences, there are a handful which might be termed 'polarity-sensitive', in that they may occur only in affirmative, or only in negative sentences" [my underlining] (Baker, 1970:169). Of the 'negative-polarity' items the following might be cited as a representative list: *much* (unstressed); *ever*; *at all*; *care to*; *any more*, ...etc. (Ibid: 170; Quirk et al., op cit: 376-77; Fillmore, 1967: 92-3). What is of interest to us here is that it has been noted that 'far from' could go perfectly well with some of these negative-polarity items, as is demonstrated by the following examples:

*He cares much for any of his students.

(20) { He doesn't care much for any of his students. }

He is far from caring much for any of his students.

*She seemed convinced at all.

(21) { She didn't seem convinced at all. }

She seemed far from being convinced at all.

This should undoubtedly be construed as a point of support in favour of the claim under consideration.

As a final note on the construction 'far from', it is essential to examine, though briefly, its formal build-up. This phrase is one single syntactic unit which has to be set apart from another seemingly similar construction, i.e. the adverb (of place) *far* plus (the preposition) *from*. These are quite different constructions, and, as such, behave syntactically dissimilarly. Thus, whereas the negation unit 'far from' takes as its complement any one of the following: a noun(phrase), a pronoun, an adjective, or an –ing form, only a noun(phrase) or a pronoun specifically can follow the other construction; and the noun(phrase) should, furthermore, denote a place or a location, as is illustrated by the following sentences:

true.

(22) a. His account of what has happened is far from {the truth }
being true.

b. I can't believe he is a traitor; he is far from it.

it.

(23) Our house isn't far from { the city centre. }

In addition, while the adverb plus preposition construction can be qualified with such intensifiers as 'too', 'very', 'so', ...etc, the negation unit will never co-occur with such items, as is revealed by the following examples:

too

(24) Our lodgings are(n't){ very}far from the University campus.

so

too

(25) *He was { very } far from being dishonest.

so

Now, given all this lot of evidence in support of 'far from', it would be legitimate to consider the possibility of admitting it as a new member of the negative (or negating) markers family, where it might be termed the 'phrasal negator'. (The term 'phrasal negator' is suggested here on the analogy of 'phrasal verb', 'phrasal quantifier', 'phrasal coordinator', ...etc, to mean a unit of more than one word used as a whole to function as a negator, a verb, a quantifier, ...etc.). One is tempted, indeed, to do so, especially if one is to count more on the semantic denotation of 'far from' rather than placing the whole emphasis on its syntactic behavior and interactions.

The admission of this form within the category of negative markers should beyond any doubt lessen the contradiction of accepting such marginally- or weakly-negating items as 'little', 'few', 'only', and the like, when a unit so markedly negative as 'far from' is denied such a status. Furthermore, this will help in re-distributing the 'weighting' (4)(which is placed by the grammarians on certain linguistic levels) between syntax and semantics without having to ignore either one of them in favour of the other. And in so doing, the negation account would be made to look more elegant, adequate and highly elaborate as to account for more linguistic facts than otherwise.

III. In Arabic, as is the case in English, a sentence is said to be negative (or negated) only if it happens to contain one of the 'known' (i.e. common) negative particles such as /lā/, /mā/, /lam/, /lan/, /laysa/,...etc. The negative particle should, furthermore, be placed at the beginning of the sentence to be negated (5). Besides, there are other, less common particles which are made use of to express the concept of negation. These are originally

employed by the language to express different other notions and perform other functions than negation, such as /'illā/ 'except', /hallā/ (which can be freely translated into something like: 'won't you...?'/wouldn't you...?'), /siwā/ 'except, excepting', and the like (cf. an-Naḥ ḥ ās(1979)). And like English, Arabic does make use of certain formally assertive constructions to express (or imply) negative meaning; this sort of negation is technically referred to as 'implied negation, (for more details on this particular point cf. Jespersen, op cit:336-7, and an-Naḥ ḥ ās, op cit:225-56). Still, there seems to be another means by which a sentence is turned negative in meaning, that is, through the employment of the construction /baʔīdun ʔan/ and its alternative forms /baʔīdun kulla al-buʔdi ʔan/ and /'abʔadu mā yakūnu ʔan/ (6) (which can all be freely translated into 'far from'). It seems that these forms have arisen in Arabic rather late. For, there had been no trace of such forms in Classical Arabic; they seem to have made their first appearance in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This might suggest that a case of syntactic borrowing could have occurred in MSA, i.e. it is highly likely that, through constant contact with other languages of the world (especially English), this construction had first come out as a translation equivalent to the English phrase 'far from'. (This issue needs to be extensively and deeply explored, which is beyond the scope of this work).

Now, as a start, let us consider a couple of examples as a preliminary attempt at exploring the semantic content as well as the syntactic behavior of these forms:

baʔīdun (...)

(26) /'inna mā qālahu ʔaliyun { 'abʔadu mā ... ʔan } al-ḥ aqīqati /
 That what said Ali far from the-truth
 'What Ali said was far from the truth'.

baʔīdatun (...)

(27) /'nna jamʔiyatanā { 'abʔadu mā ... ʔan } as-saʔiyi warā'
 ar-ribḥ i /

That Co-op-our far from the-seeking after -the profit
'Our Co-op is far from seeking to make a profit'.

Any native speaker of Arabic, if asked to interpret these sentences, would intuitively and unhesitatingly decide that they are equivalent in meaning to the following:

(28) /'inna mā qālahu ?aliyun laysa huwa al-ḥ aqīqatu /

That what said Ali not it the-truth

'What Ali said wasn't the truth.'

(29) /'inna jam?iyatanā lā tas?ā warā' ar-riḥ i /

That Co-op-our not seek after the-profit

'Our Co-op doesn't seek to make a profit.'

That is, whereas in (28) and (29) it is the presence of the negators /laysa/ and /lā/, respectively, which realizes the negation of the sentence, the negative meaning expressed in (26) and (27) is ascribable to the presence of the constructions /ba?īdun (...)/ 'ab?adu mā ... ?an /. This is, still, to say that these two types of negators belong to the same syntactic category, perform the same role and express the same notion or idea.

Not only do /ba?īdun (...)/ 'ab?adu mā ... ?an / seem to resemble 'far from' in its semantic implication, they do share some of its syntactic characteristics and interactions as well. Thus, in exactly the same way as the English 'far from' triggers the 'some-any' alternation, the presence of any one of these three Arabic constructions does also motivate the suppletion of /ba?ḍ/'some' by /'ayy/'any' as is illustrated in the following examples:

ba?ḍa

(30) /ḥ aqqaqa maṣ rifunā { *'ayyata } 'arbāḥ in / (7)

some

achieved bank-our { *any } profits

B some

'Our bank has achieved { *any } profits.

*baʔda

(31) /lam yuhaqqiqa maSrifunā { ‘ayyata } ‘arbāḥin /
 *some
 not achieved bank-our { any } profits
 *some
 ‘Our bank has not achieved { any } profits.’
 baʔīdun(...) *baʔdi

(32) /ʔinna maSrifanā {‘abʔadu mā...ʔan} taḥqīqi { ‘ayyati } ‘arbāḥin
 *some
 ‘Our bank is far from achieving { any } profits.’

Because (30) is devoid of any negative particle or marker, the only determiner which is syntactically permissible in such a context is /baʔd/, while in (31) and (32) only /ʔayy/ would make the sentence pass as grammatical. This is solely due to the presence of the particle /lam / in (31) and the construction /baʔīdun (...) /ʔabʔadu mā ... ʔan/ in (32), which is to say, again, that these two are equal in functioning syntactically as negative markers.

That these Arabic constructions are equivalent to any negative marker can be further demonstrated and confirmed by the observation that they can co-occur with some negative-polarity items of Arabic such as /ʔīlāqan/ ‘at all’, /batātan/ ‘at all’, /qaṭṭ/ ‘at all, never’, ...etc, e.g:

baʔīdun (...)

(33) /ʔinna mā qālahu ʔaliyun {‘abʔadu mā ʔan } al-ḥaqīqati
 ‘īlāqan/ ‘What Ali said was far from being true at all.’

baʔīdatun(...) ‘īlāqan

(34) /ʔinna jamʔiyatanā {‘abʔadu mā...ʔan} taḥqīqi ‘ayyi ribḥin {batātan } /
 ‘Our Co-op is far from making any profits at all.’

For, such items would never occur in a sentence unless it incorporated some negative marker, as is demonstrated by the following sentences:

‘iṭlaqan/qatṭ

(35) */yajlisu ?aliyun fī maktabihi { batātan } /
 sits Ali in office-his at all
 */Ali sits in his office at all.’

‘iṭlāqan/qatṭ

(36) /lā yajlis ?aliyun fī maktabihi { batātan }
 ‘Ali doesn’t sit in his office at all.’

There is, however, another aspect of similarity between the forms /ba?īdun (...)/ ‘ab?adu mā ?an/ and the other negative markers, that is, they have a scope of negation as well. A linguistic item is said to be within the scope of negation if it is governed (or its occurrence is determined) by a negative form (Quirk et. al., op cit:381). In order to demonstrate that these forms do exert such kind of influence over some stretches of language, let us consider a couple of examples:

?alal-?umūmi ba?īdatun (...)

(37) /’inna jam?iyatanā {?umūman } {‘ab?adu mā ...?an }
 as-sa?iyi warā’ir-riḥi /

Generally generally

‘({On the whole }), our Co-op is ({ on the whole }) far from seeking to make a profit.’

In general in general

What is being negated (or denied) here is that part of the predicate that follows the negative form /ba?īdatun ... ?an/ immediately up to the end of the sentence. That is to say, the scope of the negation here extends over that part only; it doesn’t involve whatever that precedes the negator of the sentence. So, in (37), both the adverbial (phrase) /?umūman /?alal-?umūmi/ and the subject NP before it fall outside the scope of the

negation. The sentence can, thus, be interpreted to mean the following:

generally

- It is {in general } the case that our Co-op doesn't seek to make a profit.

...

In comparison, the following sentence has to be somewhat differently interpreted, depending on where the scope of the negation is taken to extend:

(38) /'inna jam?iyatanā { 'ab?adu mā ... ba?īdatun(...) ?umūman } as-sa?iyi warā'ir-ribḥi { ?alal-?umūmi } /

This sentence, first of all, is ambiguous. It can either be interpreted as having the same meaning as that of (37) above; that is if the final adverbial (phrase) is taken to fall outside the scope of the negation. Or, it could, in another of its readings, be assigned the following interpretation:

in general

- 'It is not the case that our Co-op seeks to make profit { generally } ,

...

whereby the adverbial (phrase) at the end of the sentence is taken to fall within the scope of the negation. As a result of this, it has to be taken as functioning as a postmodifier for the head noun /ar-ribḥ/, that is to say, it is now used as a constituent of the NP /ar-ribḥ ?umūman/?alal-?umūmi /.

These forms do, then, share this characteristic of having a scope of negation with the other members of the negative markers, which provides another piece of evidence to the effect that these forms do function as negative markers in the language.

As a final remark on the construction /ba?īdun ?an/ in particular, it has to be emphatically put that this form is normally treated in the language as a one single syntactic unit (as is the case with the other two forms) which has to be distinguished from another, similar construction which is made up of the

adverb /baʔīd/ ‘far’ and the preposition /ʔan/ ‘from’ (8). Thus, only the latter construction is to be followed by a noun/pronoun denoting a place or a location, as in:

(39) /ʔinna masrifanā baʔīdun ʔan markazil-madīnati/
 that bank-our far from centre-the city
 ‘Our bank is far from the city centre.’

Because of this, a sentence like(39) can be turned negative, as in:

(40) /ʔinna masrifanā laysa baʔīdan ʔan markazil-madīnati/
 ‘Our bank is not far from the city centre.’

By the same token, only the special construction could be qualified by adjuncts such as: /ʔilā ḥaddim-mā/ ‘somewhat, to some extent’, /nawʔam-mā/ ‘somewhat’, /qalīlan/ ‘a bit’, and the like (9), as in:

nawʔam-mā/qalīlan

(41) /ʔinna maktabī baʔīdun { ʔilā ḥaddim-mā } ʔan madrasatika/
 somewhat/ a bit
 that bureau-my far { to some extent } from school-your
 ‘My bureau is { somewhat } far from your school.’
 a bit

nawʔam-mā/qalīlan

(42) */ʔinna maktabanā baʔīdun { ʔilā ḥaddim-mā } ʔan at-
 taʔ āmulī ġairil-nazīhi/
 somewhat / a bit
 that bureau-our far { to some extent } from the-
 dealing not-the honest

somewhat / a bit

*‘Our bureau is far { to some extent } from having dishonest dealings.’

Such restrictions, along with the semantic distinction, should make it clear that these are quite different constructions, despite their formal identity.

IV. Now, from the account given thus far it must have been noticed that there is striking similarity between the English construction ‘far from’ and its Arabic counterpart /baʔīdun (...)/ ‘abʔadu mā ...ʔan/. For, not only do they imply or express exactly the same meaning, there is much more in common between them than this. First, both constructions have been found to stimulate the suppletion of ‘some’ by ‘any’---a feature which is concomitant with the presence of a NEG morpheme in the sentence. Secondly, they both can co-occur with certain expressions that are negative-sensitive, i.e. negative-polarity items. Thus, while the English phrase ‘far from’ seems to fit in so smoothly and perfectly with such negative-polarity items as ‘much’ and ‘at all’, among others, the Arabic parallel forms go equally well with items such as /ʔīlāqan/, /batātan/, /qaṭṭ/, and the like, which are negative-sensitive expressions. And, finally, both constructions seem to share the syntactic restrictions, and are subject to almost the same constraints, as was illustrated in the last two sections.

To sum up, what this paper has basically been concerned with was to argue for the necessity of granting the English construction ‘far from’ and its Arabic parallel forms /baʔīdun (...) / ‘abʔadu mā ... ʔan/ recognition as members of the negators category. For, in addition to their unequivocal denotation as expressions of negation, these forms do have certain syntactic characteristics and qualifications that should be taken into account when considering the possibility of establishing them as negative markers. They might look incongruous with the other negators in terms of the criteria or the syntactic constraints which were set up by the grammarians for the purpose of establishing the negative markers, but these forms should exceptionally be counted as negative forms once the ‘weighting’---as Palmer calls it---is given more to semantics than

to syntax. The paper has, in passing, provided a fairly detailed and informative account of the semantic implications as well as the syntactic behavior of these forms in both languages.

Notes

- (1) According to McCawley, “all languages have ways of expressing the meanings of \wedge [and], \vee [or], and \neg [not] ...” (McCawley, 1976:107).
- (2) Of these forms, the last two have become the commonest and the most widely-used in the spoken as well as the written varieties of Modern Standard Arabic. The phrase /kullal-buʔdi/ (literally: ‘all the distance’) in the construction /baʔīdun kullal-buʔdi ʔan/ is an intensifier. It is, hence, an optional constituent and, as such, might be enclosed between parentheses, whereby the whole construction would look as follows: /baʔīdun (kullal-buʔdi) ʔan/. The construction /ʔabʔadu mā yakūnu ʔan/ (lit: ‘the farthest it be from’) is, semantically, the strongest (in the sense of being the ‘superlative degree’ form of the three); from the structural point of view, however, it is slightly different from the other two constructions.
- (3) Such items are treated as negative forms for three reasons; all these reasons, however, are purely syntactic in nature (cf. Quirk et. al, op cit:380; Greenbaum, 1970:174-5).
- (4) Cf. Palmer, op cit:7.
- (5) These particles are not used freely or interchangeably with all sentence types of Arabic: some are specialized in negating the verbal sentence such as /lan/ and /lam; /laysa/ is exclusively restricted to negating nominal sentences; whereas the third group, which comprises /lā / and /mā /, can be used to negate both verbal and nominal sentences. The other restriction on the use of these particles has to do with the kind of verb they must

precede: perfect or imperfect. (For more details on these particular issues cf. Ayyūb, 1957:183-6, al-Makhzūmī, 1966:118 and 147, and an-Naḥḥās (1979) ch's 3,4,5).

(6) In the interest of brevity and saving space, these three constructions will henceforth appear in the following forms: /baʔīdun (...) ʔan / (where the dots stand for the phrase /kullal-buʔdi /) and /ʔabʔadu mā ...ʔan/.

(7) It has been noted that “/baʔḍ / and /ʔayy/ are mutually exclusive only when they are determiners, i.e. when followed by indefinite nouns” (Ali, 1979:121). However, when followed by a definite noun they both can occur in a negative sentence, as in:

-/ʔusībat baʔḍul- fatayāti/

were-hurt some-the girls ‘Some of the girls were hurt’.

baʔḍul

-/lam tusab {ʔayyun minal- } fatayāti /

some

not are-hurt { any } (of) –the girls

‘Some of the girls were not hurt’ / ‘None of the girls was/were hurt’.

(8) There is, still, a third construction which is quite similar to it in form and from which it has also to be set apart, that is, the form /baʔīdan ʔan / ‘apart from’ which functions in the language as a preposition, as in:

-/baʔīdan ʔan kullil-tawaquʔāti, fāzal-mīnāʔu bil-buḥūlati /

apart from all-the expectations, won-the Port(club) in-the championship

‘Apart from all the expectations, the Port Club won the championship.’

(9) Such items are technically referred to in the literature as ‘diminishers’ (cf. Quirk et al., op cit:218).

References

- Ali, Muntaha A.M. (1979), *A Study of Negation in English and Arabic*, (an unpublished M.A. thesis, the University of Baghdad).
- Ayyūb, Abdul-Rahman M. (1957), *Dirāsāt Naqdiyyah fil-Naḥwil-?arabī*, vol. 1, Cairo: the Angle Library of Egypt.
- Baker, C. L. (1970), "Double Negatives", *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 1 / 2.
- Bolinger, Dwight (1977), *Meaning and Form*, London: Longman.
- Fillmore, Charles J. (1967), "On the Syntax of Preverbs", *Glossa*, vol. 1 / 2.
- Greenbaum, Sidney (1970), *Studies in English Adverbial Usage*, London: Longman.
- Jespersen, Otto (1968), *The Philosophy of Language*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Klima, Edward S. (1964), "Negation in English", in Fodor and Katz (eds) *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, N.J.: Englewood Cliffs.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (new ed.), (1987) London: Longman
- Lyons, John (1981), *Language, Meaning and Context*, Fontana.
- Al-Makhzūmī, Mehdi (1966), *Fil-Naḥwil-?arabī: Qawā'idun wa Taṭbīq* (1sted.), Egypt :Mustafa al-Bābī al-ḥalabī and Sons Library and Printing Co.
- McCawley, J. D. (1976), *Grammar and Meaning*, N. Y.: Academic Press.
- An-Naḥḥās, Mustafā (1979), *'asālībūl-Naḥwil-?arabiyah: Dirāsātun Wasfiyatun Ta'rīkhiyatun*, Kuwait: Ali Jarrah as-Subāh

Establishment for Publishing and
Distribution.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (4th ed.) (1989),
Oxford:OUP.

Palmer, F. R. (1974), *The English Verb*, London: Longman.

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan
Svartvik (1972), *A Grammar of
Contemporary English*, London: Longman.

Stockwell, Robert P., Paul Schachter and Barbara H. Partee (1973),
The Major Syntactic Structures of English,
N.Y. :Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

APPENDIX

Dear Madam / Sir,

I should be very grateful if you kindly check the
grammaticality and acceptability of the sentences below, i.e.
as a native speaker of English, would you accept these
sentences as grammatical? (Use (√) or (X) for your
choice).

(N.B. This information is required for an academic
research paper. Thank you very much).

any one

1. He seemed far from being interested in { some one } of
my projects.

some

2. He seemed quite interested in { any } of my projects.

3. He seemed far from being pleased, not even convinced.

4. He is always far from being reliable, let alone co-
operative.

5. He looked far from being satisfied, nor comfortable.

6. He was far from being co-operative, and neither was his
wife.