Original Paper

Vietnamese Double Negative

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Abstract

Affirmation and negation are the most basic forms of language in each language. Many things can be expressed either in affirmative or in negative way. In the Vietnamese language system, using negative expressions is more abundant than using affirmative ones. Because of this, the use of negatives in spoken Vietnamese is relatively high. Double negative is a common language phenomenon in Vietnamese spoken language, but there is not much research about double negative. The following is a preliminary understanding of the grammar and semantics, as well as a study of double negative forms in Vietnamese.

Keywords

Vietnamese, negative sentences, double negative sentences

1. Vietnamese Negative Sentences

1.1 Overview of Vietnamese Negative Sentences

Negation is an indispensable language expression in every language, and Vietnamese is no exception. The traditional Vietnamese grammar divides the negative forms into three types. First, sentences with negative and negative meanings are called "true negatives", such as: Tối qua, tôi không đi chơi (I did not go out to play last night). Second, there is a negative mark but no negative meaning, called "false negative", such as: Anh ấy còn không tốt? (He is not a good person, isn't he?). Third, there is no negative mark but there is a negative meaning, such as: Cô bé ấy mà xinh! (She is beautiful!). The third type of negation is generally uses modal words to express negative meanings. In addition to the above traditional classification methods, there is another classification method that divides negative sentences into all negative and partial negative types, e.g.,

Nó **không** đi học (He does not go to school).

→ All negative.

Nó học bài **không** thuộc (He was not prepared for the lesson).
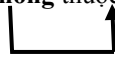
→ All negative.

These two classifications are the two most commonly used.

In Vietnamese, the negative means of expression are complex and diverse. It is not just the use of negative words to express negative meaning. Other expressions are also used. "không", "chẳng", "chả" and "chưa" are the most common negative words in Vietnamese. Among them, "không" is a neutral semantic color, "chẳng" has an emphasis color of "absolute" negation, "chả" is mostly used for spoken language, and "chưa" indicates that the speaker mentioned something or an event at the time of speaking did not appear or did not happen. The four negative adverbs in Vietnamese can generally be combined with all verbs and adjectives, and it seems that they are not subject to any semantic restrictions. The first three are interchangeable in any structure. But if arranged according to semantic colors, then the arrangement of these three words: không<chẳng<chả. In addition, position, voice, intonation, and rhetorical tone are also used by Vietnamese to express negation. In Vietnamese, this form is called an unmarked negative sentence. The Vietnamese negative sentence is also unique in that it can use animal names to express negative meanings. In addition to the four above-mentioned frequency of use, the negative words in Vietnamese have a "cóc" (frog) with coarse tone in the spoken language. The negative degree of "cóc" is far greater than the negative words such as "không", "chẳng", "chả" and "chưa". "Chó" (dog) and "khỉ" (monkey) are also common negative words. In terms of emotional color, these negative words are arranged in the following order: không<chưa<chẳng<chả<cóc<khỉ<chó. It can be seen that the animal name "chó" (the dog) expresses the strongest emotional color. Compared with "chó" (dog) and "khỉ" (monkey), the expression of "cóc" expresses more euphemistically. In addition, using modal words in Chinese language to express negative meaning is also a very common phenomenon.

1.2 A Review of Research Vietnamese Negative Sentences

The negative question in Vietnamese was put forward very early. In 1977, Nguyễn Đức Dân published "Logic và sự phủ định trong tiếng Việt", mainly discussing the logic of negation. In 1983, in the study of "Phủ định và bác bỏ", the linguist divided negative sentences into two types of negation: description and refutation, and analyzed two forms again deeply. In 2004, Diệp Quang Ban "Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt" divided the negative phenomenon in Vietnamese into six categories, mainly based on the negative adverb component as a classification criterion. In addition, many Vietnamese linguists studied the negative phenomena from a pragmatic perspective in the past few years, such as: Nguyễn Thị Nhị (2001) of "Hành động từ chối trong tiếng Việt", Nguyễn Thị Mai (2005) "Cách thể hiện hành vi từ chối lời cầu khiến bằng các phát ngôn lảng tránh", Nguyễn Quang Ngoạn "Một số chiến lược phản bác thường dung trong tiếng Việt", Lưu Quý Khương (2008) "Nghi thức lời từ chối một đề nghị giúp đỡ trên cơ sở lý thuyết hành vi ngôn ngữ". It can be seen that although there have been many studies on negative phenomena, there has been little mention of double negative sentences. Only the earliest

220

linguists in Hoàng Trọng Phiến mentioned this problem in "Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt": double negation is negative negation, and double negation is equivalent to affirmative form. In addition, in his own research he also proposed several methods of expression of double negatives, which mainly include:

S+không thể không (can not not) V

S+không khỏi không (Not unavoidable) V

S+không phải là không (is not no) V

Không (not) S+không (not) V

Không phải (not) S+không (not) V

2. Vietnamese Double Negative Sentence

In simple terms, double negation is negative twice, meaning that there are two negative words in a sentence, and affirmative semantics is expressed in the form of negation plus negation. In Vietnamese spoken language, double negation is a very common phenomenon.

2.1 Negative Subject

In this structure, a set of double negative words is combined into the subject:

Không (phải)+X+phiếm định+không+S=>X+S

Negative Word+X+General Negative Word+S

Example:

(1) Không ngày nào không có một cư dân bị đưa đến đồn cảnh sát.

(There is no day a resident was taken to a police station).

Subject:

Không+ngày+nào+**không có**+một cư dân

Negative Word+X+General Negative Word+S

=>Ngày nào cũng có một cư dân.

In Vietnamese, if the subject has a double negative phenomenon, modal words such as "mà/lại" will appear between the two negative words. The role of these modal words is to allow the hearer to quickly determine that the two negative words "không" (not) mean the equivalent of "đều/cũng" (all/also).

2.2 Negative Predicates

First we look at these examples:

(2) Tội của bố con chị **không phải không** to.

Your sins Negative words Negative words Large

(Your sins are not big).

(3) Y cũng **không thể không** ăn.

He also negative words negative words to eat

(He can't stop eating).

(4) Cô giáo **không hề** nghĩ rằng tôi **không** học bài.

Teacher negative words think of my negative words review

221

(The teacher never thought I wouldn't review).

From the example, it can be seen that Vietnamese negative predicate phenomenon has two modes: "không (phải/thể)/chưa/chẳng+không/chưa/chẳng+V" (like example 2, 3) and "không (phải/Thể)+X+không/chưa/chẳng+V" (Example 4). In the perception of Vietnamese, this double negative is equivalent to strengthening affirmative meaning. For example, in Example 3 above, the phrase "không thể không+ăn" (can't be eaten) would mean "reluctant to eat". In Example 4, "không hề nghĩ rằng tôi không học bài" has a meaning that I always review.

2.3 Negative Subject+Negative Predicate

"Negative subject+negative predicate" is the most common double negative phenomenon. Its basic mode is:

Không (phải) S không V

Negative words S Negative words V

From a semantic perspective, this negative semantic color is slightly lighter than the corresponding affirmative sentence. This is contrary to the negative predicate phenomenon, e.g.:

(5) **Không phải** tôi **không** biết thế là hay.

Negative words negative words

(Not that I don't know if that's good).

Tôi biết thế là hay

(I know that's good).

(6) **Không phải** tôi **không** chấp nhận.

Negative words negative words

(It's not that I don't accept it).

Tôi chấp nhận

(I accept).

In **some cases, this pattern will produce ambiguity, e.g.:**

(7) Không phải Lan **không** đi học.

Negative words negative words

(It's not that Lan doesn't have off class).

Example 7 will have two meanings: First, it is not because of absence of class, but Xiaoming is not in class; Second, Lan is not in class, but she is late. In other words, the first negative word "Không phải" in the example may be the main "Lan" or the second negative word "Không".

Let's look at another example:

(8) Cả rừng cây **không** cây <u>nào</u> **không** bị thương.

Negative words General reference words negative words

(There is no tree in the deep forest was not injured).

Cây nào cũng bị thương

(So the trees were all injured).

222

(9) Thứ tình cảm ấy **không** người <u>nào</u> **không** có.

Negative words General reference words negative words

(No one does not have that feeling).

Thứ tình cảm ấy ai cũng có

(Everybody has that feeling).

From examples 8 and 9, we can propose another double negative formula: "không+X+General reference+không+V". In fact, the general position of Vietnamese is very flexible.

(10) **Không** <u>bao giờ</u> nó **không** nhắc đến mày.

Negative words General reference words Negative words

(There was no time he didn't mention you).

From examples 8, 9, and 10, we can draw the formula: "không+generalized word+X+generalized word +không+V". The flexible position of the generalized word and the negative word "không" combine to give the subject part an absolute negative meaning. The appearance of generalized words makes the negation color of sentences of negative subjects+negative predicates more absolute.

2.4 Clause of Negative Complex Sentence

In Vietnamese, there are some conjunctions, adverbs, or pronouns in the two clauses of a complex sentence, e.g.:

(11) **Không** ai **không** lầm <u>mà</u> tưởng mình đang đứng trước cảnh tượng đó.

Negative words negative words conjunction

(Everyone thought they were still standing there).

(12) Đồng tiền đã vào tay <u>mà</u> **không** dính một chút thì **không** hợp đạo lý.

Conjunction negative words negative words

(The money is in the hand, it's not reasonable to take a little).

(13) **Không** phải vì thế <u>mà</u> ngài **không** thay mặt dân nữa.

Negative words conjunction negative words

(Not because you don't represent the people).

In the above compound sentence, "không" can be used to negate the first sentence (11) and can be used to deny the latter half (12). When "không" is also distributed in two clauses, it can deny the entire sentence (13). If the conjunction "mà" appears in a double-negative complex sentence, then the entire sentence will be pejorative. The self-conjunction "mà" has no derogatory meaning, but it has a turning direction.

2.5 Other Double Negative Forms

In addition to the above typical double-negative forms, there are other forms in the Vietnamese language system, such as the negative word "không"+the negative meaning Hanyin negative word "phi/vô/bất" (non/none/no), e.g.:

(14) **Không** có điều gì **bất** hợp lí cả.

Negative words Han Yue Yin negative words

(Nothing is unreasonable).

(15) **Không** phải là **phi** lí.

Negative words Han Yue Yin negative words

(It's not unreasonable).

The combination of negative words "không" and some modal words "nàocó, đâuphải, đâucó" is also a double negative of Vietnamese.

(16) Lan **đâu có không** đến.

Lan modal words negative words come

(Lan is not not coming).

(17) **Đâu phải** nó **không** học hành gì.

Modal Words He Negative Word Learning

(Not that he didn't study hard).

In the general case, a sentence with two negative words will be considered as a double negative sentence. But in fact, not all sentences with two negative words are double negative sentences.

(18) Nó **không** g<u>ầy</u> mà cũng **không** <u>béo.</u>

Negative words thin negative words fat

(He is neither thin nor fat).

(19) Sống **không** ra <u>sống</u>, chết **không** ra <u>chết.</u>

Negative words live Negative words dead

(Neither dead nor live).

(20) Cả ngày nó **chẳng** <u>nói</u> **chẳng** <u>rằng</u>.

Negative words speak negative words speak

(He never speaks all day).

(21) Nó từ nhỏ đã **không** <u>cha</u> **không** <u>mẹ.</u>

Negative words father negative words mother

(He had no parents since he was a child).

Examples 18, 19, 20, and 21 are not double-negative sentences, but simply deny two opposites "gầy/béo; sống/chết" or the same factor "nói/rằng; cha/mẹ". These examples do not have a positive meaning. In addition, the interrogative word "khônglẽ/ chẳnglẽ" (negative) with a negative element combined with a negative word does not belong to the double negative category, e.g.:

(22) **Không lẽ** nó đến rồi mà lại **không** thăm thầy ?

Question words Negative words

(Does he come and do not come to see you?).

2.6 Double Negation and Affirmative Form

In the general case, the double negative form is equal to the affirmative form. But will there be a difference between the two expression methods? Let's take a look at an example:

(23) Bữa ăn đó **chắc chắn** sẽ làm tôi nôn mửa

(The meal will definitely make me sick).

*Bữa ăn đó **không thể không** sẽ làm tôi nôn mửa.

Bữa ăn đó **không thể không** làm tôi nôn mửa.

(That meal can't not make me feel sick)

(24) Việc đó **chắc chắn** sẽ ảnh hưởng đến việc học của cháu

(It will definitely affect your learning).

*Việc đó **không thể không** sẽ ảnh hưởng đến việc học của cháu.

Việc đó **không thể không** ảnh hưởng đến việc học của cháu

(It can not affect your study).

(25) Tôi **phải** đến đó một lần

(I must to go over there).

Tôi **không thể không** đến đó một lần

(I can't not going there).

From the example, we can conclude that the double negative "không thể không" is equivalent to the affirmative word "chắc chắn/phải" (certain). But there will be a little difference between them. The Vietnamese double negative sentence cannot bring the "sẽ" (will/will) time word behind, and the affirmative "chắc chắn" does.

In Vietnamese, "không thể quên" (can not be forgotten)="không thể không nhớ" (can not not remember). The difference between these two statements is that "quên X" X has already occurred, and "không nhớ X" does not have this assumption.

2.7 The Semantic Nuances of Double Negative Sentences

In general, the semantic color of a double-negative sentence is more objective and more euphemistic than an affirmative sentence. It can bring more effects and can persuade the listener. According to the semantic color, affirmative sentence and double negative sentence will have the following order: phải V (certain V)>không thể không V (cannot not V)>không Vkhôngđược (not V cannot)>không thể nào không (cannot not)>không thể không+X (cannot be X). Although the negative words of double negative sentences are basically composed of negative words of "không", when this negative word is combined with each modal word, it will produce different color phrases. This makes the double negative format an interesting phenomenon in Vietnamese.

3. Conclusion

The above is a preliminary study of the double negative structure in Vietnamese. As a typical isolated language, Vietnamese vocabulary system is more developed. The double negative structure of Vietnamese is a common phenomenon because each pair of negative words can be combined with each modal or generalized word to create a different semantic color. Therefore, in Vietnamese, the double negative format has multi-level semantic color functions. Of course, there are many issues that need to be studied in relation to the double-negation format. For example, why do we affirm that forms can be

followed by words that represent the future and double-negation forms cannot? In which case, a sentence with two negative words cannot be regarded as a double negative sentence? These problems also need to be studied more deeply.

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