

## Sentential Negation in English

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper undertakes a detailed analysis of sentential negation in the English language with Chomsky's Government-Binding theory of Transformational Grammar as theoretical model. It distinguishes between constituent and sentential negation in English. The essay identifies the exact position of Negation phrase in an English clause structure. It observes that insertion of "do-support" as last resort meant to derive sentential negation from a declarative that lacks an auxiliary verb is a language specific derivation peculiar to the English language. The paper also analyzes the contraction of "not" to "n't" and its conjoining to an auxiliary verb acting as its host. It observes that this phenomena takes place only when the auxiliary verb is a bound form. The contracted "not" is always bound to its host to form a double head which is fronted in the derivation of a Yes/No question.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The system of contrast between a positive and a negative clause is known as polarity. The main function of a negative sentence is to express "...logical negation"<sup>1</sup> (Huddleston 1988) sentential negation is a linguistic universal; however, there are cross-linguistic variation in its derivation (Zanuttini 2003).

This paper analyzes sentential negation in English based of Chomsky's principles and parameters theory of transformational grammar. The essay identifies negation phrase (hence forth referred to as NEGP) as an independent syntactic category headed by a single invariant negation. It analyzes the derivation of NEGP and identifies its exact position in an English clause. The paper also discusses in insertion of "do-support" to allow for the percolation of inflectional affixes as a precondition for deriving sentential negation from a