THE EXPRESSION OF NEGATION IN THE LANGUAGE OF BRITISH TEENAGERS. A PRELIMINARY STUDY[1]

Ignacio M. Palacios Martínez
University of Santiago de Compostela
Spain

This paper, based primarily on data from the COLT corpus, is concerned with the description of those features of the negative polarity system which can be regarded as particularly characteristic of teenage language. A comparison is drawn with the expression of negation by adults, looking at a subcorpus of data extracted from the DCPSE. Findings are classified into three main categories: syntactic, lexical and pragmatic. At the syntactic level, teenage spoken language is characterised by a high frequency of negatives, a large number of negative concord structures, a common use of *never* as a single negator in the past, and an idiosyncratic way of intensifying negative statements. Regarding lexis, the innovative use of some new negative items and a high proportion of negative polarity idioms are observed. From a pragmatic perspective, the language of the teenagers in the corpus is notable for its avoidance of hedges and for being extremely direct and straightforward. Adolescent speakers also tend to use negatives as a kind of game to contradict their interlocutors. The paper concludes by arguing that the expression of negation in teenage language is best understood within the framework of the interaction of cognitive and sociological variables.

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that teenagers play a crucial role in language development and change. In comparison to the stable language production typical of adult speakers, teenagers' language tends to introduce innovations (Labov 1972; Romaine 1984; Eckert 1988; Kerswill 1996; Andersen 2001; Rodríguez 2002; Stenström et al. 2002; Tagliamonte 2005). These changes often become incorporated in the adult language later on.

The special code of British adolescents includes a variety of interesting and distinctive features: the use of *like* as a quotative marker (*I was like oh come Carla hurry up*), a high volume of slang and taboo words (*fucking*, *shit*, *bloody*, *crap)*, many vague words and expressions, including placeholders (*thingy*), quantifiers (*loads of*, *sort of*) and general extenders (*and stuff, and all, or whatever*),[2] a large number of non-canonical tags (*innit*, *yeah*, *right*, *eh*, *okay*), the tendency to use *right* and *well* as

adjective intensifiers (*They've been right bastards to you*; *I was well drunk*), etc. Adolescence is a turning-point in life, as the individual matures both physically and cognitively, and this has a direct influence on language acquisition and development. However, cognitive factors alone cannot explain the configuration of children's and adolescents' language; the development of communicative competence in this period involves the interaction of both cognitive and sociolinguistic variables, such as age, gender, style, ethnic and social backgrounds (Romaine 1984). Moreover, this language variety helps us understand the evolution of a particular language in general.

Adolescents are responsible for new developments at almost all levels of the language, from phonology to syntax and discourse. It has been suggested in the literature, for example, that teenagers may not only favour new phonological variants (Horvath 1985) and the reduction of dialect differences at a regional level (Kerswill 1996; Kerswill & Williams 1997; Kerswill 2003; Cheshire, Kerswill & Williams 2005),[3] but that they also promote grammaticalization processes and structural reanalysis (Andersen 2001: 9). According to Romaine (1984:104) and Rodríguez (2002: 46), teenagers also tend not to comply with the standard rules of both language and society, and are prone to using highly stigmatised forms.

The above tendencies have been observed not just in English but across a variety of languages. Thus, several contrastive and comparative projects have been carried out with English, Spanish and Norwegian, taking as their bases corpora provided by teenagers and adolescents. This is the case with COLT (Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language), COLA ('Corpus oral de lenguaje adolescente', that is, Oral Corpus of Adolescent Language) and UNO ('Ungdomsspråk och Språkkontakt i Norden', Nordic teenage language).[4] Thus, Stenström (2005a, 2005b) has studied the use of intensifiers, tags and taboo words among girls from London and Madrid; Rodríguez

(2002: 37) explains the expressive lexical resources used by Spanish adolescents in terms of three main processes: transfer of meaning or semantic change, code change and register change. In a similar way, Casado (2002) has focused on semantic and morphological features of this variety while Herrero (2002) has discussed its syntactic characteristics.

The question of polarity, and negation in particular, has been widely discussed in linguistics. From the classic and seminal studies of Jespersen (1917), Poldauf (1947), Klima (1964), Givón (1978) and Horn (1989), negation has come to receive increasing attention, especially over the past thirty years, and interest shows no signs of abating. Recent work of particular relevance for this study includes Tottie (1991), Haegeman (1995), Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Tottie & van der Wurff (1999), Anderwald (2002), Mazzon (2004), and Iyeiri (2005).

Despite the growing literature here, there is still need for detailed research into particular varieties of English, the analysis of multiple and double negation in different dialects, the behaviour of negation in the areas of pragmatics and the expression of negation in particular genres and discourse types. In this paper I will concentrate on the system of negation in British adolescent language; it will contribute to a more complete characterisation of this variety, as well as adding to our understanding of negation in English generally.

I will deal here with those areas of analysis which, at first sight, seem to differ most widely from the use of negation in adult mainstream English: frequency of negation; negative types; negative intensification; negative concord; particular use of *never*, both as a negative intensifier and as a form negating something in the past; and, finally, uses of negative expressions. Due to limitations of space, forms, such as *ain't*, *innit, int*, *nope* and *nah*, will not be included in the present study.[5]

The findings reported below will show that in order to understand the expression of negation by teenagers it is necessary to consider psychological and sociological variables. Psychological factors in the development of adolescents are responsible for their tendency to be categorical in their expression and to avoid hedges. The condition of their age also makes them prone to experimenting and playing with language, and this is at times reflected in interactions constructed by a succession of negatives in which one speaker systematically contradicts another. Sociological variables, such as type of education, ethnicity, cultural and social background, and degree of formality play an important role both in the grammar and lexis of the negatives used by London youths.

Method

This paper forms part of a general study of the spoken language used by young people in Britain with special reference to the system of negation. The data have been taken from the COLT corpus. Compiled in 1993, this corpus, which is part of the Bristish National Corpus (BNC), consists of 431,528 words from a total of 377 spontaneous conversations produced by teenagers from 13 to 17 in the London area, including the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Barnet, Camden, Hackney and the county of Hertfordshire. These conversations together represent roughly 100 hours of recorded speech. Although most of the informants can be classified as middle adolescence, some teachers and relatives of some of the informants also speak, although their participation is very limited.

Whereas COLT was compiled in an attempt to represent language produced by British adolescents, it should be borne in mind that all the speakers are from the London area, with its own geographical, social and ethnic variables. The London boroughs represented in the corpus also have substantial numbers of children from ethnic

minorities and this itself could have a bearing on the type of the English used. Thus, this corpus should not be regarded as fully representative of general adolescence British English, but rather of London teenager speech. Nevertheless, some of the tendencies observed in the analysis here, especially in the area of syntax and discourse, will be understood as characteristic of general teenage English and even of adolescents' language. Furthermore, features of London English, pronunciation in particular, seem to be spreading throughout the country (Williams & Kerswill 1999, Foulkes & Docherty 1999), so taking London as a starting-point might be a useful means of assessing aspects of teenager language more generally.

With the purpose of comparing the findings here with general English and, more particularly, with adult mainstream British English, data extracted from COLT will be compared to comparable samples taken from the Diachronic Corpus of Spoken English (DCPSE). To ensure the best comparison, texts classified as informal face-to-face conversations (403844 words) and assorted spontaneous speech (21675 words) were selected from DCPSE, a total of 425519 words. The DCSPE is sampled from both the London Lund corpus and ICE-GB. In the case of the data selected for the present study, 75 percent is from ICE-GB, which was recorded at the early 1990s, that is, at a similar time as COLT. To contrast the findings from these two corpora, comparisons on some occasions will be made with the findings of other studies, such as Tottie (1991), Biber (1988) and the Longman corpus.

For the analysis I regarded as negative, in the first place, those grammatical items that are fully negative from both a syntactic and a semantic perspective:

- The particle *not* including enclitic forms of operators and modal verbs, such as *hasn't, haven't, isn't, aren't, ain't, don't, didn't, mustn't, won't, can't, couldn't, mightn't, needn't, shouldn't, wouldn't,* etc.:

(1)   She _won't_ give me a bit of her flake. (CO/B136501/138) [6]

(2)   I *ain't* telling the truth. (CO/B133101/35)

- *not* as a modifier to several determinatives (*much*, *many* and *enough*):

(3)   Piss off. I suppose. There's *not* much point in asking you. (CO/B137701/35)

- *never* as head of an Adv phrase:

(4)   Keith lost it so we *never* sent it. (DC/DIB03/280)

- *no* as determiner in a NP structure or modifier in the structure of comparative AdjPs and AdvPs:

(5)   You've *no* idea what it's like. (DC/DLB16/0147)

(6)   I'm *no* longer Peter's footman. (DC/DLB16/0582)

- *none* as head in a NP structure or modifier in the structure of comparative AdjPs and AdvPs preceding *the*:

(7)   I ain't telling you no more cos I don't know *none.* (CO/B135805/138)

- *nobody*, *nowhere*:

(8)   Basically we've got *nowhere* to sit this lunch time. (CO/B133901/101)

(9)   *Nobody* likes birch trees. (DC/DIB20/0109)

- *neither*:

(10) by the look of things *neither* has Mr <name>. (CO/B141602/51)

- *nor* and *nothing*. In the case of the latter, alternative forms transcribed in the COLT corpus as *nuffink* and *nuffin* were also considered:[7]

(11) Members of the Tory party in their constituencies have no say whatsoever *nor* does big business. (DC/DIB8100/94)

(12)   She don't buy *nuffink.* Emma's a right pain and a wimp. (CO/B135306/222)

- Sentence pro form *No* and its variants in the corpora, such as *nah*, *nope, na,* represented by Upper case N to distinguish it from the determiner:

(13) You don't mind do you? *Nah*, I didn't think you would. (CO/B140601/327)

(14) A: Oh he wouldn't even go out with Sherry yet and like, he wouldn't even talk

to her yeah and like she's in the fucking same school er er ...

B: I think she <unclear>. *Nope*. (CO/B139614/116-117)

The sentence pro-form *No* functions grammatically as a sentence, whereas all the other forms are intra-sentential. Particular forms transcribed in the COLT corpus as such were also considered. This is the case with *dunno* (*dun know >don't know*), as in:

(15) I *dunno* a Hitler kind of approach. (CO/B142706/2)

Lexical words with an inherent negative meaning such as *fail*, *prevent*, *refrain*, *eliminate*, *deny*, *refuse*, *stop* were not included in the analysis for two reasons. Firstly, in terms of syntax these items form part of sentences expressing positive polarity. Secondly, it is almost impossible to come up with a complete inventory of them, and as a consequence, it would be extremely difficult to retrieve them all automatically with a corpus of this size. Cases of incomplete or approximate negation with *few*, *barely*, *seldom*, *rarely*, *hardly*, *scarcely* and *little* were also discarded when considering the general frequency of negation. Instances of subclause, local or constituent negation, and morphological or affixal negation, were also ignored when assessing the frequency of negation in global terms, since the aim was to restrict the analysis to full negative sentence contexts, not only from a semantic point of view but also from a syntactic one. A study of these negatives will be reserved for an independent section, because of their distinctive features.

Throughout the analysis I followed Tottie (1991), distinguishing between sentence and intra-sentential negation, between affixal and non-affixal negation and, thirdly, between sentence and constituent negation.[8] The frequency of negation was calculated

on the number of occurrences of the negative items per 100,000 words; percentages and normalised frequencies were calculated when necessary.

For the analysis of the COLT data, I first manually examined about one third of the total conversations to gain a working familiarity with the topics discussed and different speakers involved. Once I was aware of the potential variables and factors that could have a bearing on the study, I used the application Concapp4 for an automated analysis of the corpus. For the DCPSE sample, I used the tools provided by the system itself, known as ICECUP (ICE Corpus Utility Program). Although Concapp4 and ICECUP facilitated part of the work, it was then necessary to filter manually the resulting data to make sure all occurrences met the conditions required. This entailed not only the analysis of each example individually, but very often the context in which these examples appeared as well.

Results

Frequency of Negation

My initial approach to the COLT data had clearly indicated that the number of negative expressions was extremely high, even higher than in previous studies, such as Biber (1988), Tottie (1991), Palacios Martínez (1995), Biber et al. (1999), and Hidalgo Downing (2003), all of which find that negation is far more common in speech than in writing. This high frequency of negation can be explained by the fact that certain linguistic functions of negation are speech-specific; this, for example, is the case with explicit denials, rejections, support-givings and repetitions.[9] Negation, then, is characteristically higher in interaction than in writing.[10]

In fact, there were extracts of this corpus where exchanges contained series of negative items, one after the other, as in example (16) below. This issue will be further discussed when considering the pragmatics of negation.

(16)   A: [this geezer from Bedlam yeah] got stopped the other day in this car yeah,

he was pissed, he was tripping and he was speeding yeah, *no not, no licence,*

no tax, [no ruddy insurance yeah]

B: [<nv>laugh</nv>]> right he's getting put away. (CO/B133705/118)

The high number of negatives, the tendency to accumulate them in the same speech unit, the use of dialectal forms typical of this variety (*ain't, innit*, *nope*, *nah*, *dunno, nuffink*) and the particular communicative and pragmatic effect conveyed by some of these structures all suggested from the outset that the teenage discourse here was especially interesting in terms of the expression of negation.

Table 1 below compares the total number of negatives in COLT, as representative of British teenagers' speech, and in the subset of DCPSE, representing general adult spoken British English. The overall count is most illustrative: 14305 versus 9722 occurrences.

A total of 1332 examples were discarded from COLT and 1392 from DCPSE, These included examples of subclause or constituent negation, unclear cases and cases difficult to classify for technical reasons, (either because the corpus did not provide enough information or because the context was insufficient), question tags and repetitions, the latter being mainly structures where *no* as a response word to a previous statement was repeated twice or more, a phenomenon which is not infrequent in current speech and which is part of the normal interaction between speakers. In the case of the these repetitions, the expressions were counted as a single unit.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

Frequency of negatives per 100000 words are 3301.7 in COLT versus 2273.8 in DCPSE. The difference is statistically significant (x^2 = 788,72, df = 1, p<0.001). The average obtained here for adult speech differs from that reported by Tottie (1991:17), who records a figure of 2760 per 100000 words, on the basis of a small sample extracted from the London Lund Corpus. Biber et al. (1999: 159), on the other hand, report a frequency of 2220 per 100000 words, almost identical to my findings here. The divergent nature of the corpora, plus the different criteria used for the identification of the negatives may make inevitable some variation in findings in different studies. What is clear in the present study, however, is that my general hypothesis is confirmed: British teenagers' language, as analysed here, exhibits a higher number of negatives than the speech of adults.

I will now discuss two main types of negatives: subclause and affixal negation.

Subclause, Local or Constituent Negation

The number of subclause negatives is very limited, especially as compared to the proportion of intra-sentential negatives mentioned above. There are 43 cases in COLT and 37 in DCPSE. Several distinct patterns of subclause negation were found and these are laid out in Table 2 together with their frequencies in both corpora. Differences between teenagers' and adult language, however, are not significant.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

Affixal or Morphological Negation

The proportion of affixal negatives is quite limited in COLT, with a total of 222 instances/431528 words (114 suffixes + 108 prefixes), as compared to a total of 321/425519 words (177 suffixes + 144 prefixes), in DCPSE. However, this is a significant difference (x^2=19.79, df = 1, p<=.0001). The relative frequencies are 51 and

75 per 100000 words, respectively. This difference might be explained by the internal organization of the corpora and by questions of register. The language of teenagers is more spontaneous, full of colloquial and slang expressions, and less formal than that of adults. With this in mind it is unsurprising to recall that affixal negation has long been associated with written and formal varieties of language (Zimmer 1964; Marchand 1969; Tottie 1991; Palacios Martínez 1995).

Table 3 below shows that, broadly speaking, the distribution of the negative suffixes follows similar trends in the two corpora. The two items *unless* and *without* account for almost 79 percent of the tokens in COLT and 84 percent in DCPSE while the suffix -*less* was reported on 24 and 29 occasions respectively, that is, about 21 percent and 16 percent of the general count. The adjectives *useless*, *pointless* and *hopeless* are in this order the most common in both corpora although their frequency varies: 7, 4 and 3 occurrences in COLT versus 11, 7 and 4 in DCPSE. Furthermore, some lexical items of this type occur only in one corpus. The adjectives *mateless*, *gormless* and *dickless* are, for example, found only in COLT, while *endless*, *faultless*, *timeless* and *colourless* are found only in DCPSE.

[TABLE 3 HERE]

Table 4 shows the distribution of negative prefixes in the two corpora. In both corpora the prefixes *un-* and *in-* are the most recurrent.[11] *Non-* is the least frequent in both cases although in DCPSE 18 words contain it, amongst them *non-stop* and *nonsense*.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

The following table shows those lexical items containing a negative prefix with the highest number of occurrences in the two corpora.

[INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]

As was the case with negative suffixes, a wider range of words of this nature are recorded in the sample of adult language than in the teenagers' variety. Examples of these items are: *uncertain*, *unnecessary* and *inefficient*.

Teenagers sometimes coin innovative or nascent forms and phrases in their speech. Adjectives like *uncool* and *unscrewable* are not uncommon, and indeed *uncool* is relatively well-established in colloquial speech, denoting just the opposite of being fashionable or trendy as (17) illustrates.

(17) As if it matters they have to get off the train with a cigarette in their mouth or they are *uncool*, some shit like this. (CO/B139201/129)

Unscrewable as seen in COLT refers to something that has been carefully planned and which cannot go wrong.

(18) It's all *unscrewable* the whole thing practically. (CO/B141405/461)

The previous words probably emerged from a process by which teengaers coined neologisms on the spot, mainly for expressive reasons. Consider also (19):

(19) He is being *unfuckingtouchable*, you imagine. (CO/B142105/369)

Here the speaker inserts the intensifier between the negative prefix and the base form of the word. This is also found with the negative prefix *non-* as in:

(20) A: Well you're not gonna tape anything!

B: I am. All through music, *non fucking* stop. My only thing in life will be, for the next hour and forty minutes, fuck, I live to tape, okay? (CO/B132404/3)

These could be analysed as examples of expletive lexical infixation, a morphological process which is quite common in colloquial speech (McMillan 1980; McCarthy 1982; Yu 2007).

Negative Intensification

Intensification is employed as a linguistic resource to convey the message more clearly and to strengthen the speakers' position as well as their attitude towards what they are saying (Bolinger 1977). Several studies have focused on the general intensifying strategies used by adolescents. Erman (1997, 1998) looks at *just* as an emphasiser and Stenström (2005a) considers *well* as an intensifier. Such studies underline the tendency of adolescents to strengthen their statements in fairly overt ways.

In keeping with this, my first premise here was that teenagers would resort more often than adults to intensifying resources in the conveying of negation to make their speech more credible and to lend more force to their message. The expression of negative intensification in general standard English has been studied extensively (Jespersen 1917: 17; Bolinger 1977: 122.; Quirk et al. 1985: 785; Downing & Locke 2005; Tottie 1991; Palacios Martínez 1996). Most of these accounts can be applied to youth language.

With these premises in mind, a comparison was drawn between the language of teenagers and adults as regards the mechanisms used to intensify negative sentences. Attention was paid to intensifying expressions with negative import, such as *at all*, *no way*, *a/one bit*, *in the least*, *in the slightest*, *not even*, and negative intensifying expressions formed in combination with certain verbs, which could be classified as figurative idioms or restricted collocations (*not be bothered*, *not have a clue, not have a chance, not give a shit/a toss/ a fuck*, etc.). The results for the two corpora are laid out in the following table.

[INSERT TABLE 6 HERE]

In the light of these findings, no important differences are noted between the two groups, contrary to the initial premise. However, the partial figures for group 1 and group 2 (153 versus 248 and 155 versus 67, respectively) clearly indicate that teenagers prefer to use idiomatic expressions while adults opt for negatively-oriented polarity sensitive items (NPIs). Furthermore, it is also the case that the linguistic strategies used differ from one group to the other, in the following ways:

Expressions with negative import

In COLT these are represented almost exclusively by *at all*, *no way* and *a/one bit*. No instances are found of those alternative, typical negative intensifiers, such as *in the least, in the slightest*, *by any means*, which are perhaps more literary in tone and which are certainly encountered in the speech of adults, although not with great frequency.

The locution *no way*, either in the middle of a sentence or as a reply to a previous question or request, is particularly common in the teenagers' repertoire, especially as compared with adult language. In COLT it is recorded on 27 occasions and only 14 times in the DCPSE subcorpus. In teenagers' language it often collocates with existential- *there* sentences, as in (21):

(21) Thing is there's *no way* Gemma and <name> are gonna be be allowed to stay upstairs when they've got boys downstairs. (CO/B142302/62)

Negative intensifying expressions formed in combination with certain verbs

These constructions could be classified as figurative idioms or even as restricted collocations (Cowie, Mackin & McCaig 1983), since one of the components may not be used with its literal meaning. Huddleston et al. (2004: 823) classify them as NPIs. The data obtained clearly indicate that teenagers make use of a greater number of such structures. The following examples are characteristic of the teenagers' speech, yet are not regularly found in adult language:

(22) I haven't got a piss boy. (CO/B134901/113)

(23) I don't give a fuck! (CO/B132503/38)

(24) Oh, I don't give a shit. (CO/B133701/190)

In sum, my initial premise regarding the frequency of negative intensifying structures in adolescents' discourse is not confirmed; no differences are recorded between the speech of adults and that of teenagers in this respect. However, it is observed that teenagers resort to particular strategies to strengthen negative messages: common use of the locution *no way* and a high proportion of intensifying negative polarity idioms.

Negative Concord

Negative concord involves the presence of two or more negatives in the same clause which do not cancel each other out. (Huddleston et al. 2004: 845). Consider the following:

(25) He *ain't* got <u>no</u> water left. (CO/B133901/184)

(26) It *don't*, it *don't* look *no* different to me. (CO/B135207/58)

(27) Third base he *don't* know *nothing* man! (CO/B135303/1)

This feature is typical of non-standard varieties of English across the world (Huddleston *et al.* 2004: 847) and is found in almost all non-standard dialects of British English (Edwards & Weltens 1985: 106; Anderwald 2005: 118). It is also particularly noticeable in the case of London teenage speech. Here the presence of negative concord is restricted to the co-occurrence of a clause negative form, such as *not* together with a negative quantifier within the scope of the negative. This is the case with examples (25) and (26) above. Alternately, a negative quantifier such as *nobody* or *nothing* can be used

together with a sentence negator, as in (27) above, where *nothing* occurs within the scope of *not*. Few examples of multiple negatives were recorded in the present data.[12]

In the analysis of negative concord, I followed Huddleston et al. (2004), Biber et al. (1999) and, more particularly, Anderwald (2002, 2005). In order to arrive at a percentage of actual versus possible occurrences, a search was made for those negative elements considered in this study and the co-occurrence of these forms with other negative elements that would be equivalent to standard negative expressions containing only one negative element. This means that multiple combinations of these negative items were retrieved and examined, although I paid special attention to those examples where I identified negative concord structures which in standard English would occur with a single negative item. The total number of possible examples in which I could find variation was 687; out of these 158 were cases of negative concord. That is, in 23 percent of all cases, negative concord constructions were present; in other words, on 23 percent of the occasions, speakers opted for negative concord structures. This proportion is considerably higher than that reported by Anderwald (2005: 118), who records a global average of negative concord forms of 14 percent for general British English using data from all the spoken sections of the BNC, the COLT included; however, she finds that southern Britain is where negative concord is most frequently used, and she identifies, in particular, a rate of 21.4 percent for the geographical area of London.

The findings on negative concord are laid out in Table 7 below. The negative elements listed in columns indicate the first elements of the respective negative concord structures; figures in rows show the corresponding second elements. The first cell in Table 7 can thus be interpreted as follows: the combination *–n't/no/dunno* occurs with *nothing/nuffink* in 45 cases, with *no* in 61, with *none* in 1, and so on.

[INSERT TABLE 7 HERE]

It can be inferred here that only 5 negators act as the first elements (*n't/not/dunno, ain't, never*, *hardly* and *no*) in a clause containing a negative concord structure. This contrasts with the list of items occupying a second position in similar constructions, where seven different elements (*nothing/nuffink*, *no*, *none*, *no more*, *never*, *nobody/no one* and *nowhere*) are found. No cases are recorded, for example, in which *nobody*, *nothing* or *nowhere* appear in first position followed by any other negator in the clause. This may be explained by the strong negative meaning associated with these lexical items. Of the first set, that is, those occupying first position, *-nt/not* and *ain't* are used in 146 out of 158 cases,[13] representing over 92 percent of the total; they act in over 9 out of 10 of all cases as the first element. In the remaining negative concord structures, *never* occurs as the first element in 2.5 percent of cases and *no* in the remainder, about 5.5 percent. The case of *hardly* is marginal, with only one case identified; it has been included here, despite not being a full negative item, because of its exceptional status- no examples of this kind are normally reported in the literature.

(28)   Why don't she *hardly* never look after … David any more? (CO/B133705/19)

It can thus be concluded that *n't* and *no* together account for almost 98 percent of all first elements while *hardly* and *never* play a rather marginal role as first elements of negative concord structures, which is in accordance with the previous data. As second elements, *nothing* and *no* clearly prevail, occurring in this position in almost 89 percent of all cases, and are followed by *nobody/no one* and *no more* with percentage occurrences of approximately 4.4 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively. *Never* and *nowhere* are far less well represented in this respect and no examples are registered in which *n't/not* or *ain't* function as the second element.

Broadly speaking, the findings here do not differ greatly in terms of the distribution of negative elements in negative concord structures, from those obtained by Anderwald (2005) in her general study of negative concord in spoken British English. However, my findings plus the structure and configuration of the COLT corpus itself do not allow me to conclude that negative concord is a general sociolectal phenomenon rather than a feature of typical regional variation, as Anderwald claims (2005: 122). The issue requires further study, where both social and regional factors can both be fully addressed.

As regards the pragmatic function of these constructions, it could be hypothesised that by using negative concord the speakers tend to accentuate the negative effect of their message. This can be clearly seen in the two examples below. (29) forms part of a monologue in which the speaker is coming to the end of a joke she has been telling to a group of friends. In this case, *fucking* also serves to accentuate this intensifying negative meaning.

(29) The third man comes out like this ... he goes what's a matter with you? He goes you've got your cigarettes. <shouting>*I didn't get no fucking matches*, did I?</> That was my little joke that. ...(CO/B132701/6)

In (30) the two speakers are looking at a picture and then the dispute starts.

(30) A: Wow, look at that man, look at at that, please take a look at that.

B: That's a normal picture.

A: *Ain't no normal picture*, man. (CO/B134602/633)

In contrast with the previous examples in which negative concord clearly serves to accentuate a negative meaning, there are cases in which similar structures simply form part of the negative polarity system of the users and are equivalent to standard negative

meanings. This can be seen in (31) in which the speaker simply reports that J. does not want any tea:

(31) A: I want a cup of tea as well.

B: You want a cup of tea?

A: Yeah.

B: I'll do it in a minute.

A: Mum, Jxxx says, *Jxxx don't get no tea n*ow. (CO/B135204/32)

Thus, it can be concluded that negative concord structures do not always have a strengthening effect simply because of the repetition of the negative forms. It is necessary to examine each case in detail to determine its communicative purpose. Contextual and prosodic information can help here.

Never

I turn now to the use of *never* as a full negative form in the language employed by the teenagers of the sample. This negative item has already been the focus of attention in the British English dialect literature, most specifically in several studies conducted by Cheshire, Edwards & Whittle (1989), and Cheshire (1997, 1999) The main claim made by these sociolinguists is that the process of standardisation interrupted the negative cycle of language change, first pointed out by Jespersen (1917), and which has been repeated over the centuries, "consisting of using a universal temporal quantifier, meaning 'ever' or 'on one occasion' to reinforce a negative expression that has become weakened through frequent use" (Cheshire, 1997: 69). According to this theory, had this interruption not taken place, *never* could have ended up replacing *not*. Moreover, Cheshire (1997: 75) also suggests that the use of *never* can often be a good strategy for creating interpersonal communication in the spoken language.

In present-day English, *never* is very frequently used to express universal temporal negation, as in (32). However, it can also convey negation as referred to a particular point in time in the past,"punctual *never*", as in (33); this even includes cases when a specific temporal reference is included in the sentence (34):

(32) I've *never* heard anything so clearly in my whole entire life. (CO/B132616/21)

(33) I *never* meant it like that. (CO/B137103/100)

(34) Vernon and <unclear>*never* called for me yesterday. (CO/B136903/164)

Cheshire (1997) shows that educated British lecturers and university students tend to accept examples of sentences in which *never* is used as a simple negator of something that took place in the past, including those cases with a specific time reference. However, these particular uses of *never* do tend to be more frequent in non-standard varieties of English.

In the present data a total of 340 occurrences of *never* were found, although 16 of these were excluded because they were repetitions typical of speech; three further cases were not considered because they were impossible to analyse for technical reasons. The total number of examples finally examined, then, was 321; thus, *never* occurs with a frequency of 78 per 100000 words. This finding is similar to that of Biber et al. (1999: 797), who record an occurrence rate of 80 per 100000 words in their British English conversation sample.

When considering the variation between *never* and *not… ever*, I found that speakers opted almost universally for *never*- the pattern *not … ever* occurring only three times. This result is fully in keeping with previous studies (Cheshire 1982; Tottie 1991, Quirk et al. 1985) and seems to reinforce the assumption that *never* should be classified as a full negative word which does not show variation with *not*-negation items.[14]

Having dealt with the frequency of *never* and its variation with *not… ever*, I turned to its uses in the corpus. Table 8 below sets out the findings here. In over two thirds of occurrences, *never* is used as a universal temporal negator. However, in 16.5 percent of the total instances of punctual *never* occur.

[TABLE 8 HERE]

There are only two examples in which the point in the past is explicitly mentioned, as in (34). In almost 3 percent of cases, *never* is used with future reference; that is, the reference is not to all time but only to all possible cases in the future. This can be seen in (35) below:

(35) We went down by ourselves. Well, how we got down alive I'll *never* know. (CO/B141202/146)

Occurrences of two semi-idiomatic expressions: '*You never know*' and '*I never*!', account for slightly over 4 percent of cases. The former of these conveys that something which apparently seems to be unlikely may in fact happen, while the latter negates something categorically, usually referring to something somebody claims the other person has done. Consider (36) and (37) below:

(36) A*:* Oh God, he's gonna win in he?

B: *You never know Mum.* The other geezer might have full hold of Peter… (CO/B135603/98)

(37) A: Excuse me, did you just push me?

B: No *I never* did push you. (CO/B132701/56)

This last sentence is also an example of *never* being used to negate a single incident in the past and, again, is non-standard. Finally, I also found a significant number of cases (6.2 percent) in which the expression *never mind* was used, and several instances

of the combination of *never* with *ever* to emphasize or intensify an already negative meaning.

Finally in this section, I note that the two most salient features of *never* are its relative frequent use as a single negator in the past, a finding which is in accordance with non-standard varieties of English, and that almost no variation was identified between *never* and *not … ever* structures, which confirms the results of previous studies.

Pragmatic Functions of Negative Structures in Youth Language

As Cheshire et al. claim (2005: 142), "the analysis of discourse features, like the analysis of syntactic variation, requires a more complex analysis than a simple counting of the number of tokens. Again, we need to consider how speakers use discourse features in interaction". This section will concentrate on the particular pragmatic uses of negation as expressed by teenagers. Taking as a starting-point Tottie's pragmatic typology of negation and the results of previous studies (Givón 1978; Palacios Martínez 1995, 1996; Downing & Locke 2005), I found in the corpus, as expected, a large number of negative expressions which serve to deny something (an action, a particular form of behaviour, a fact, a statement), either implicitly or explicitly, together with refusals or utterances in which one or several of the speakers openly show their unwillingness to accept, admit or do something. This can be seen in the following conversation extracts, which can be classified as examples of implicit denial (38), explicit denial (39) and refusal (40), respectively:

(38) P*:* Miss! Miss! Miss!

D: Now listen, now listen. *This is not recording* is it?

P: Yeah

D: Now listen. (CO/B132403/79)

(39) P: J. erm, have you erm, erm there it is, Hello. Have you erm, done any, did you have music homework?

J: Yeah, *I didn't do it*, <unclear> (CO/B132404/12)

(40) S: It was so funny, I had this weird dream the other night, you know, [I mean

J: [If it's about] Take That <u>I</u> *don't wanna hear.*[15]

S: Oh yeah. It was.

J: No, I *don't wanna hear it*. (CO/B132601/43)

In (38) P. and D. are engaged in a conversation about the recording of their tape.[16] Although no explicit mention has been made of this, both are perfectly aware of what they are talking about and this allows the former to say that the tape recorder is not working, an example of an implicit denial. Example (39), however, is an example of an explicit denial, because P. asks J. directly whether she has done her homework for the music class and the latter responds negatively. In (40) S. feels like talking about a dream she had the previous night but J. refuses to hear anything about it, a case of direct refusal.

Along with these discourse functions (implicit and explicit denials and refusals), I also identified (albeit, to a lesser degree), negative sentences used to convey strong promises (41) and questions (42):

(41) C: [<shouting>Lucy how can] you [do that]</>?

J: [Shh.] Can you pinch exeats off other people?

L: [No but I, I did <unclear>]

C: [No you can't but she's trying to convince,] you *I will never trust you* again, [that's it,]

Lucy: [Why?] (CO/B142602/484)

(42) N: [Oh], look at the Jungle Book! Oh I, I just [love that!]

J: [Really?]

N: Yeah. *Don't you think* it is really good? (CO/B132601/102)

In spite of this, none of the discourse functions described above differs greatly from mainstream English. As discussed before, a large number of negatives occur in the data, which is explicable in terms of the very structure of the corpus; the conversations included in COLT are mainly personal interactions between speakers with very few monologues; the corpus comprises mainly dialogues in which several adolescents are engaged in conversations that can be regarded as representative of daily life events. However, it is necessary to explore in more detail what makes the data here so different from mainstream adult English in terms of the pragmatics of the expression of negation.

One of the most notable features here is the high proportion of negatives as directives. The dialogues are full of them and they are an indication of the teenagers' directness and spontaneity in their expression:

(43) J: And *don't put your greasy little hands*, ha? <nv>laugh</nv>

S: Oh hi W.!

W: You alright Sxxx?

J: What are you doing here you cunt?

S: <laughing> *Don't call my boyfriend* a cunt </>(CO/B132601/5)

The adolescent speakers in the corpus rarely resort to circumlocutions or other roundabout expressions to persuade interlocutors of their intentions, to suggest a way of action or to give an order or a command; on the contrary, they tend to be open, straightforward and even categorical. Positive politeness strategies seem to play an important role in teenagers' discourse (Brown & Levinson 1987).This clearly contrasts with adult behaviour. The teenagers described here do not soften the force of their negatives to make them sound more polite or tentative, but rather opt for

straightforwardness and the use of negative statements without resorting to the kinds of adverbial attenuators typical of the language of adults, such as *actually*, *really*, *necessarily*. In fact, the corpus contains a relatively small proportion of all such expressions (I *don't really know*, *I can't actually think*, *I can't really say*, *I'm not entirely against the idea*, etc.) with which adult speakers avoid committing themselves to a particular idea or opinion. In (44) and (45) below we can appreciate the contrast between the adults' and the teenagers' ways of using the language in the expression of negation. In both cases the speakers are talking about a particular person they know, so the topic of conversation is exactly the same; however, while in (44) the two adults make use of all sorts of roundabout expressions, including negative structures, before committing themselves to a particular opinion, in (45) teenagers are much more direct, spontaneous and categorical, and do not mind expressing their views straightforwardly, even contradicting each other.

(44) A: She's a strange girl.

B: I know who she is but she's been rather uh <,> elusive <,> as far as I'm concerned.

A: Yes.

B: oh yes <.> yes well <unclear>

A: She's a very funny girl

B: What's her name?

A: <unclear> uh it's Polly Mich <unclear>

B: uhm <,> oh yes I know the girl you mean <,> well. *I don't really know her*. (DC/DLB0404/92)

(45) A: You know that girl? What's that girl's name?

B: Who?

A: Erm, *I don't even know* what her name is. She's in the second year and she's Cxxx's cousin, the one with the afro.

A: Oh, is that her cousin?

B: Yeah, I think so. Do, do my legs look like hers?

A: Your what?

B: My legs.

A: *I wasn't looking at her legs*, I <unclear> legs.

B: Oh god! Well I noticed.

A: Noticed what?

B: Erm that girl's l= [legs.]

A: [Who] noticed?

B: The, curly [haired one.]

A: [You noticed] what they look like?

B: *N=, no* my legs are quite whole.

A: Who said that?

B: *No one*.

A: Yeah so you <unclear>]

B: [Oh *your {legs} are not*]

A: {Yeah.} You know that gir= girl with the afro?

B: [*No*.] (CO/B140704/21)

In addition to these distinctive pragmatic features of teenagers' negative speech, two others are worthy of note. The first is the tendency to accumulate several negatives in the same turn of speech. This is generally done to intensify the message, and at times this is even reinforced by cases of negative concord structures. The second feature is explained in terms of teenagers' fondness for playing with language, a phenomenon that

has been reported extensively in the literature, not only in the case of the first language (Bakhtin 1981) but also in the learning of a second language (Cook 1997; Tarone 2003). In the corpus, I found several episodes in which one of the speakers tries to mimic a specific accent (generally American, Norwegian, German, African, West Indian, Pakistani, Cockney or a 'posh' variety, such as RP) or even imitates the way of speaking of a particular person, usually a teacher or a peer, just to sound funny and to make others laugh, or perhaps to tease one of their peers. By the same token, it is common to find extracts in which one speaker begins to make a statement and a second speaker contradicts what has just been said; the conversation is then constructed by a succession of exchanges in which one of the speakers says something and the other states the opposite immediately afterwards. Negation thus becomes a means of playing with language while at the same time enabling teenagers to consolidate their personality and reinforce their point of view. Observe the following conversation extract:

(46) S: had his hands on the bloody thing he, I just got his a= I just jump up. [Cos I]

  J: [You but] S *you don't* <laughing> *you don't* </>… <laugh>

  S: [*No I never*!]

  J: Yes you did Sxxx!

  S: <laughing> *I never* </>

  J: He saw your body.

  S: *I never*.

  J: and ever [since then, face it Sxxx!]

  S: I *ne=*, *no* shut your mouth! Shut up! <shouting> *I'm not*.

  J: That's <unclear> Sxxx</>

  S: He's a dirty, rotten bastard!

  J: Sxxx

S: *No*!

J: you enjoyed it.

S: *No.*

J: Face it!

S: *No*!

J: You enjoyed it.

S: *I never*![17] (CO/B132603/323)

It is not possible to understand the discourse function of teenagers' language in their expression of negation unless a correlation is drawn between their use of language and their psychological and cognitive condition (Romaine 1984; Eckert 1988; Andersen 2001; Stenström et al. 2002). Psychological factors typical of this period in the development of a person (spontaneous behaviour, search for identity, rapid cognitive development, strong desire to enjoy life and have fun) will serve to explain their high involvement style and their frequent use of negative directives, the tendency to accumulate negatives in short stretches of language to intensify their message, the scarcity of negative hedges in their speech (since adolescents tend to be direct and straightforward), and their liking for turning their use of negatives into a verbal game with peers.

Conclusions

This paper has analysed some syntactic, lexical and discourse features of negatives in the speech of London teenagers, focussing particularly on the description of those features of the negative structures which are typical of teenage language, especially as compared to the equivalent adult.

The study was based on data from the COLT corpus. A total of 14305 negatives were closely examined with the help of the application Concapp4; on many occasions,

however, the units considered had to be manually analysed, since contextual information was needed for a sound interpretation of the data. With the purpose of comparing findings with adult main stream English, comparisons were made with a comparable sample selected from the DCPSE, which included informal face-to-face conversation and assorted spontaneous speech.

The findings can be classified in three main categories: syntactic, lexical and pragmatic. In terms of syntax, a high frequency of negatives on the teenagers' part was observed, certainly higher than in spoken adult mainstream English. This was explained partly by the structure of the corpus itself, but also in terms of cognitive and psychological features typical of teenagers. In their conversation adolescents tend to make their points clearly and to be categorical as a strategy for self-reinforcement. Furthermore, the data in both corpora considered confirm that spoken interaction is especially propitious for the expression of negation.

As far as negative types are concerned, affixal negation was observed to be little used in teenagers' conversations, since their speech is characterised by its informality and colloquial nature. Also noted was the adolescents' strong tendency to intensify language. Negative intensification is achieved through the use of three main mechanisms: certain expressions of negative import, *no way* being the most common, especially as compared with the language of adults, negative concord structures, and some negative polarity idioms (*I don't give a fuck*, *I don't give a shit*, *I couldn't give a toss*). In addition to this, it is quite common to find certain swear words, such as *bloody* and *fucking,* inserted in the middle of the negatives for heightened effect.

The abundance of negative concord constructions is also noteworthy: in 23 percent of structures where it was possible to find variation between clauses with a clause negative form, such as *not* together with a negative quantifier within the scope of the

negative, and negative concord structures, the latter occurred compared with 14 percent in adult speech. It is quite possible that geographical factors, social class and style may in fact play a more important role here than the age of the speakers. Finally, the high frequency of *never* as a single negator in the past, and the non-existent variation between *never and not … ever* structures in the data, were both notable findings.

As regards lexis, there was a high occurrence of innovative forms with a negative prefix, *uncool*, *unscrewable* for example, as well as the use of a high number of negative polarity idioms. From a pragmatic point of view, teenagers stand out for being extremely spontaneous, direct and frank in their expression; this, it was argued, explains the high number of negatives as directives. In connection with this, a low number of negative hedges, so typical of adult language, were also observed. Adolescents engage in different forms of language play. They might repeat words or sentences just for the sake of it, or to hear how they sound; they imitate sounds, a particular accent, or the way somebody speaks, either to make fun of them or, again, simply for the sake of it; they might also resort to negation to contradict systematically what the other speaker has just said. The conversation thus becomes more of a game one has to play and, if possible, win.

All the tendencies reflect the cognitive development of teenagers as applied to language production, as well as the role played by certain sociological variables, such as geographical background, ethnicity, social class, type of education and gender. Hence, the expression of negation in the language of teenagers has to be understood in the framework or interplay of cognitive and sociological variables. Psychological factors can explain the high involvement of teenagers' speech, their directness, their frequent use of negatives as directives and their keenness to play with language. In contrast, sociological variables may account for the high proportion of negative concord

structures, the frequent use of *never* as a single negator in the past, and the occurrence of idiosyncratic negative forms such as *nope*, *nah*, *dunno*, *nuffink*, *innit* as invariant question tags, and the form *ain't*. At times it is difficult to distinguish the effects of these two sets of variables (cognitive and sociological) since they may operate jointly.

This preliminary analysis has attempted to illustrate the innovative nature of teenagers' language in the expression of negation and how negative polarity is of particular interest in this variety. There are, however, a number of issues which in need of further attention: the specific role played by some of the sociological variables (geographical factors, gender, education, social class), a full study of some of the negative forms and types identified (*innit*, *ain't, nope)*, and the pragmatics of negative concord structures.

Notes

1. The research reported in this article was funded by the Galician Ministry of Innovation and Industry (INCITE grant no. 08PXIB204033PRC-TT-206). This grant is hereby gratefully acknowledged. I am also very grateful to Ann Williams, Javier Pérez Guerra and María José López Couso as well as two anonymous reviewers and the journal editors for reading and commenting on a preliminary version of this paper and for providing very useful suggestions.

2. For further details on general extenders, see Dines (1980), Aijmer (1985), Overstreet & Yule (1997), Overstreet (1999, 2005) and, more recently, Cheshire (2007) and Tagliamonte & Denis (forthcoming).

3. The project "Linguistic innovators: The language of adolescents in London" has been developed recently by Kerswill and Cheshire with the purpose of investigating the spoken English of London, looking in particular at the variety used by local teenagers.

One of the main findings has been that students from different ethnic backgrounds all speak with the same dialect, one which is in fact spreading to other multicultural cities like Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester. This term *Multicultural London English* (MLE) is used to refer to this variety. See

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators> (20 September, 2009).

4. For more information about these corpora, see <http://torvald.aksis.uib.no/colt/>, <http: www.colam.org> and <http://www.uib.no/uno/unoEng/>. (20 September, 2009).

5. *Innit* has already been studied in detail by Algeo (1990), Krug (1998), Andersen (2001), Stenström et al. (2002: 184-191), Cheshire et al. (2005: 155-159) and Tottie & Hoffmann (2006).

6. Unless stated otherwise, all examples are from the COLT (CO) and the DCPSE (DC) corpus and have been transcribed following the conventions of these two corpora. The speakers have been generally referred by using capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to preserve their anonymity. Each example is accompanied by a code indicating the text number from which it was taken and the conversation turn reference given. Example (1), then, is from COLT, text number B136501 and the corresponding conversation turn was 138.

7. This particular transcription used in the COLT corpus to represent *nothing* /nʌθiŋ/ reflects the frequent use of /f/ instead of /θ/ in the London pronunciation varieties. This is what is known in the literature as *TH-fronting* (Wells 1982). Two other typical features from these varieties are the use of /v/ instead of /ð/ and the occurrence of glottal stops on intervocalic position, as in *butter*.

8. Proposals made by other grammarians are not much different in this respect. Thus, Huddleston, Pullum et al. (2004: 787) refer to four major contrasts: verbal versus non verbal, analytic versus synthetic, clausal versus subclausal and ordinary versus

metalinguistic. With the exception of the last type, this typology does not distinctively differ from Tottie. The same is true for Quirk et al. (1985: 775), who distinguish between clause, local and predication negatives, and Downing & Locke (2005: 179), who classify negatives as nuclear, including within this group verbal and non-verbal, and implied or seminegative.

9. For further information about the meaning of these categories, see Tottie (1991) and Palacios Martínez (1995).

10. Biber (1988: 108-109), in his study on English speech and writing, finds that synthetic negation is related to several other features, including past tense verbs, third person personal pronouns, perfect aspect verbs and present participial clauses, which are typical of narrative action. From this he hypothesises that synthetic negation may be more literary than analytic negation.

11. *In* represents in this case the four forms *in-*, *im-*, *il-* and *ir-* in intervocalic position.

12. See Palacios (2003) for a full account of multiple negatives in present-day English.

13. Although *ain't* could easily have been included in the first group under *n't /not/ dunno,* given that it is an enclitic form and largely equivalent in the corpus to *am not*, *is not*, *are not*, *have not* and *has not*, I decided to provide the results for this category independently, because the number of occurrences is quite high. Furthermore, I also noted a high correlation between the use of *ain't* and negative concord structures. Thus, from 52 possible occurrences, a total of 32 examples of *ain't* with negative concord constructions was recorded. As explained earlier, limitations precluded a close examination of this form here.

14. Tottie (1991: 285) recorded only a single instance of *not… ever* from 72 possible sentences in her spoken sample and Quirk *et al*. (1985: 783) point out that in all cases, except that of *never*, the combination of *not* and the non-assertive word, (*any, no, anything, anywhere*) tends to be more common in colloquial language than the negative variant.

15. *Take That* was a very popular music group in the 1990's.

16. It is important to bear in mind that the teenagers themselves conducted the recordings for most of the corpus data here.

17. This would be another example of *never* used instead of the negative preterite *didn't*.

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Ignacio M. Palacios Martínez obtained his Ph.D. in English in 1992 from the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain). Since 1995 he has been working as Associate Professor in the English Department of the same university. At present he is the

principal investigator of a research project concerned with the description of spoken English according to text-type and with the study of English speech from the perspective of teaching and learning. He is also Head of the University's Modern Language Centre.

TABLE 1

Total number of full negatives in COLT and DCPSE (face-to-face conversations and assorted spontaneous speech)

Negative word	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	Relative frequency per 100000 words	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens	Relative frequency per 100000 words
not	2416	559	1785	419
no as determiner or modifier	343	79	334	78
Pro-form *No*	3504	810	1936	455
nope	3	0.6	0	-
nah	58	13	3	0.7
ain't	280	64	1	0.2
isn't	154	35	461	108
aren't	36	8	65	15
wasn't	210	48	270	63
weren't	101	23	70	16
don't	2882	667	1771	416
doesn't	334	77	360	84
didn't	716	165	576	135
hasn't	93	21	84	19
haven't	410	95	312	73
cannot	15	3.4	11	2.5
can't	937	217	576	135
won't	315	72	126	29
shan't	1	2	9	2
mightn't	1	2	2	0.4
wouldn't	266	61	239	56
shouldn't	52	12	46	10
nothing/ nuffink	254	58	150	35
nowhere	13	3	14	3
no one	85	19	19	4
none	30	6	24	5
never	340	78	358	84
nor	28	6	11	2
nobody	51	11	93	21
neither	12	2.7	16	3
dunno	365	84	0	-
Total	**14305**	**3301.7**	**9722**	**2273.8**

TABLE 2

Subclause negatives in COLT and DCPSE (Face-to-face Conversations and Assorted Spontaneous Speech)

Subclause negative type	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens
Group 1: main verb (*tell/ prefer/ try /decide/ attempt/ advise/try/seem/appear*) + *not* + infinitive/-*ing* verbal form e.g. I prefer *not to predict;* It's me that I told him *not to go*; I'll attempt *not to turn this off*.	16	12
Group 2: preposition (*with/for*) + full negative words (*nowhere* / *nothing)* e.*g.* Her Mum gives, her Mum gave her thirty pounds one Saturday *for nuffink* right; We found a space *with nothing*.	8	4
Group 3*:* preposition *(with/for)*+ *no* + noun e.g. There's nothing worse in life than getting to old age, or getting anywhere *with no money*.	7	5
Group 4*: had better* + *not* e.g. You'*d better not come* in my door.	7	6
Group 5: adjective phrase + *not* + infinitive verbal form e.g. You are *fool not to avoid* it; I shall be *careful not to draw*.	2	9
Group 6: idiomatic phrases (*no fuck*) e.g. Who's got *no fuck* all commonsense?	2	0
Group 7: when + *not* + infinitive verbal form e.g. I choose *when not to shut up*; the thing about speaking is to know *when not to speak*.	1	1
Total	**43**	**37**

TABLE 3

Distribution of Negative Suffixes in COLT and DCPSE (Face-to-face Conversations and Assorted Spontaneous Speech)

Negative suffix	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens	**Total**
without	48	96	144
unless	42	62	104
-less	24	29	53
Total	**114**	**187**	**301**

TABLE 4

Distribution of Negative Prefixes in COLT and DCPSE (Face-to-face Conversations and Assorted Spontaneous Speech)

Negative prefix	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens	**Total**
un-	76	84	160
in-	29	42	71
non-	3	18	21
Total	**108**	**144**	**252**

TABLE 5

Word Frequency with a Negative Prefix in COLT and DCPSE (Face-to-face
Conversations and Assorted Spontaneous Speech)

Negative prefixal items	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens	Total
impossible	7	23	30
unlikely	5	16	21
unusual	5	15	20
unfortunate	4	11	15
immature	12	3	15
unbelievable	3	9	12
unfair	5	5	10
unhappy	3	6	9
illiterate	6	1	7
irrelevant	2	5	7
illegal	2	5	7
uncomfortable	4	2	6
undo	5	0	5
undress	4	1	5
uncommon	4	1	5
unjust	1	3	4
Total	**72**	**106**	**178**

TABLE 6

Negative Intensification in COLT and DCPSE (Face-to-face Conversations and Assorted Spontaneous Speech)

Negative intensifying strategy	COLT (431528 words) Number of tokens	DCPSE (425519 words) Number of tokens
Group 1: intensifying expressions with negative import		
at all	97	213
no way	27	14
a/one bit	3	2
by any means	0	1
in the least	0	2
in the slightest	0	1
not even	26	15
Subtotal	**153**	**248**
Group 2: Negative intensifying idiomatic expressions	155	67
Total	**308**	**315**
Relative frequency per 100000 words	71	74

TABLE 7

Distribution of Negative Elements in Negative Concord Structures in the COLT Corpus

2nd/1st element	*n't/not/dunno*	*ain't*	*never*	*hardly*	*no*	**Total**
nothing/nuffink	45	4	-	-	7	56
no	61	23	-	-	-	84
none	1	-	-	-	-	1
no more	4	3	-	-	-	7
never	-	-	2	1	-	3
nobody/no one	2	2	2	-	-	6
nowhere	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	**114**	**32**	**4**	**1**	**7**	**158**

TABLE 8

General Uses of *never* in the COLT Corpus

Temporal reference	N	%
Universal reference	217	67.6%
Past reference (punctual *never*)	53	16.5%
Future reference	9	2.8%
you never know	7	2.2%
I never!	7	2.2%
never mind	20	6.2%
never ever	8	2.5%
Total	**321**	**100**