The Development of English Negation
In an EFL Context

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Abstract

The paper compares the use of English negative forms by Saudi Arabian students in the 9th and 12th grades (who completed 3 and 6 years of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), respectively) to find out whether learning English in a purely foreign context can eliminate some stages or forms of negation found in natural second language acquisition. It was found that while “Not + X” was of higher frequency in the production of the 9th grade students, “don’t + X” (unanalyzed don’t) was more abundant in the production of the 12th grade students. The differences between the two groups in using the two forms were statistically significant. This finding suggests that formal instruction does not suppress natural tendencies of acquisition; the natural developmental path of the acquisition of negation ensues in the EFL context despite the focus and the sequence provided in the classroom. Another finding was that the subjects in both groups performed better in using the negative forms in the translation task than in the free writing task. The difference in the performance of the two groups of students in the use of the negative forms in the two tasks was statistically significant. This indicates that teaching can aid the learner’s explicit knowledge of the target language in classroom practice and activities, e.g., drills and tests, but has marginal effect, if any, on the use of forms in natural communication.

1. Introduction

Research studies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have
ascertained that learners of English as a second language generally go through certain stages of development en route to native-like use of a given structure (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Gass and Selinker, 2001). Stages have been identified for morphological development (e.g., plural formation, tense inflection, and reflexives) and for syntactic development (e.g., negation (see section 2.1 below), question formation, and word order). These stages, evidenced in many learners regardless of their learning environment or first-language background, suggest some universal tendencies in acquiring particular syntactic constructions over time (Gass and Selinker, 2001).

SLA research studies have also ascertained that classroom learners follow the same route of development as naturalistic (non-classroom) learners do (Ellis, 1984, 1990; Al-Afaleg, 1991). For example, classroom learners exhibit the same stages of development in acquiring negation (see section 2.2 below), as well as verb placement and word order. Such understanding has fostered a heated debate over the effect or role of formal language instruction in learning a second/foreign language (Norris and Ortega, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 1992). The question of classroom instruction is far from simple, and the issues involved are many and complex. Furthermore, the related literature is extensive, and due to space limitations only the effect of instruction on the developmental sequences is considered. Simply put, given that the effect of instruction on developmental sequences and acquisition orders is claimed to be minimal* (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Pienemann, 1998; Al-Tarouti, 2002) i.e. it does not change the natural sequence of language acquisition, the present paper

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* The claimed positive role of formal instruction, however, merits a brief clarification. Firstly, formal instruction appears to be effective in the rate and level of ultimate SLA. However, the wide differences implicit in the manner of instruction limit the generalizability of the findings in this area. Secondly, the claims of the researchers who assign positive role to instruction are over-optimistic and not fully supported by the data they produce. Thirdly, the apparent gain in accuracy as a result of formal instruction is limited to 'simple' structures (structures which do not involve complex processing operations and are clearly related to specific functions.) Nonetheless, accuracy in the use of forms appears to be confined to classroom activities and practices, i.e., it does not carry over to natural communication. Fourthly, the positive effect of formal instruction is conditional. For example, if it is extensive and well-planned, it is likely to work.
sets out to examine whether formal instruction of English in a purely foreign context can eliminate some stages or forms of negation, enhance the development of negation or speed it up.

2. Acquisition of English Negation by Second and Foreign Learners

2.1 Acquisition of English Negation by Naturalistic Learners: A Summary of Findings

One of the most investigated areas in second language studies is the interlanguage negation system. The acquisition and the use of negative forms and their positions by naturalistic learners of English were reported (Cancino, Rosansky, and Schumann, 1978; Eubank, 1996; Milon, 1974; Schumann, 1979; Stauble, 1984). The findings of these studies on naturalistic second language acquisition suggest the following:


   **Stage 1 (no/not + X):** The negator (usually *no* or *not*) is typically placed before the verb or the element being negated, as in

   1. *No bicycle.*
   2. *No have any sand.*
   3. *Not like it.*

   ‘No’ is preferred by some learners, perhaps due to transfer from their first language. For example, while Italian and Spanish speakers may prefer ‘no’ since it corresponds to the negative form in Italian and Spanish, the Norwegian speakers mostly use ‘not’ (Littlewood, 1984: 42.)

   **Stage 2 (Unanalyzed don’t):** ‘No’ and ‘not’ are alternated with ‘don’t’. However, ‘don’t’ is not marked for person, number or tense and it may even be used before modals like ‘can’ and ‘should’, as in

   4. *He don’t like it.*
   5. *I don’t can sing.*
Stage 3 (Aux -neg): Learners begin to place the negative form after auxiliary verbs like 'are', 'is' and 'can'.

6. He is not here.
7. He can't eat nothing.

At this stage, 'don't' is still not fully analyzed, e.g.,
8. She don't like rice.

Stage 4 (Analyzed 'don't') : 'Do' is used for all its functions as a marker of tense and person

9. I don't work.
10. We didn't have supper.

Learners, however, may continue for sometime to mark tense, person, and number on both the auxiliary and the verb:

11. I didn't went there.
12. She doesn't wants to go.

The following points about these stages are worth mentioning:

1) Stages were determined by the dominant form; i.e., the most frequent form at the various times of data-collection. (Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann, 1978)

2) There is no abrupt transition between stages; the stages are not discrete. That is, there is a considerable overlap with different forms present together at any given stage.

3) The 'unanalyzed don't' is used in stage 2 simply as an alternative to no or not, rather than as a productive structure consisting of 'do + not'. (It is impossible to ascertain when don't becomes a productive analyzed structure (do, does, did + not) rather than a single element equivalent to no or not.) (Littlewood, 1984: 43).

4) In spite of the variability in learners' performance, all naturalistic learners, regardless of age or L1 background, gradually progress through those stages (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 257). The learner's first language does not affect the order of stages. It can, however, affect the length of time that particular stages last. That
is, learner’s L₁ may prolong a certain stage, as is the case in the acquisition of English by Spanish learners who tend to use the verbal negation for a longer period than other learners because they have the common negative pattern in their native language (‘no + V’) (Schumann, 1979). L₁ may also lead to an "additional stage". For example, German learners of English (Wode, 1976) and Norwegian learners of English (Ravem, 1968) place the negative particle “not” after the main verb (e.g., “John go not to school”), analogous to the patterns of their respective native languages.

5) Learners take a considerable time to go through the observed stages, which suggests that complete acquisition of English negation is a very slow process.

2.2 Acquisition of English Negation by Classroom Learners

Some studies, which were conducted to investigate whether the second language acquisition process differs under formal instruction dealt with the acquisition and use of English negation, among other systems, by instructed learners: in a classroom setting (Turner, 1979 Ellis, 1984, and Felix, 1981) and a tutor-learner setting (Schumann, 1978).

Felix (1981) studied 10-11 year old children in EFL classrooms in West Germany. His thirty-four subjects had only classroom input. He reported that despite early and daily drilling in elliptical negative (e.g., “It isn’t ...”) the learners could not use not or n’t correctly. In exercises requiring the use of n’t-negation in answers to questions, the children did not use preverbal negation, but used no instead. Their spontaneous utterances also contained the negative operator ‘no’ in constituent negation (e.g. “It’s no my comb”). This is comparable to the preverbal negation which naturalistic learners use in their early production. When the propositional negation (main verb negation with don’t/doesn’t) was introduced, the subjects used those negative operators external to the sentence (e.g., “Don’t she eat apple?”). That is, the subjects used the unanalyzed don’t form sentence initially as an external negator. Similarly, in lessons where the focus was on the use of do-support in negating declarative sentences with finite verbs the
learners used *don’t/doesn’t* external to the sentence by analogy with ‘no’. They produced sentences like:

13. *doesn’t the people watch a lion.*

14. *don’t my father smoke the pipe.*

These sentences were of preverbal-negation type because the task was to produce negative statements, not negative questions. Since 12% of the students’ utterances were instances of sentence-initial negation type and another 52% were instances of unanalyzed *don’t*, Felix interpreted the learners’ use of *don’t* and *doesn’t* as morphemic variants of *not* and *no*, and thus comparable to those used by naturalistic learners, as reported by Stauble (1984). In light of these findings, Felix concluded that formal instruction cannot inhibit the processes which comprise the natural human ability for language acquisition. In other words, instructed and naturalistic types of second language acquisition involve the same underlying learning process (Felix, 1981, 108). Consequently, he argues, “the possibility of manipulating and controlling the students’ verbal behavior in the classroom is in fact quite limited” (Felix, 1981: 109).

In a similar study, Ellis (1984), like Felix, concludes that, despite the existence of some differences, the same processes found in naturalistic second language acquisition are at work in classroom acquisition. Ellis reports that his three Punjabi-speaking children have almost identical developmental profiles similar to those observed in naturalistic second language acquisition. For example, although negative patterns (including elliptic sentences) were formally taught at various points during the school year, the children began with anaphoric negation using *no*, then external negation, where *no/not* is the first element in the sentence, e.g., "No this one", or "No you playing here", followed by internal negation (pre-verbal), where *no/not* or *don’t* is put before the verb, e.g., "He no like it", or "She don’t have job", with gradual change from the use of *no* to *not*, but *don’t* was rarely used. Ellis also found that by the end of the school year the children had only barely reached the second stage of negation, where the negative particles, *no, not* and *don’t*, occur
sentence internally.

As a small part of a large study, Schumann (1978) attempted to teach English negation to his subject, Alberto, who was a naturalistic acquirer of English as a second language. Before the “teaching”, Alberto’s negative utterances were mainly of the “no + V” type. The instruction covered a seven-month period, during which time Schumann collected both spontaneous and elicited negative utterances from his subject. The elicited utterances showed a marked development (64% correct compared to 22% before instruction). The spontaneous utterances, however, showed no significant change (20% correct compared to 22% before instruction). Schumann concluded that the instruction improved Alberto’s production only in test-like practice sessions, while his production in spontaneous conversation remained unchanged; i.e., there was no significant extension of instructional effect to natural communication situations (Schumann, 1978: 109).

Furthermore, Turner’s longitudinal study (Turner, 1979) of three adult native speakers of Spanish enrolled in a formal ESL program revealed that the subjects’ acquisition order of negation did not correlate with the order in which negative structures and forms had been presented in their textbooks or classroom instruction. This may indicate that an internal processing mechanism produces or ensures the natural sequence even when instruction presents a different sequence for learning (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982; Felix, 1981; Wode, 1981). In other words, the different stages of negation which learners pass through may be determined more by an internal syllabus than an external syllabus, i.e., textbook and instructional activities (Littlewood, 1984: 34).

In summary, the findings of research studies on the acquisition of second language negation in formal classroom suggest the following conclusions:

First, acquisition of negation in the classroom seems to be similar to that in a naturalistic environment; it follows the same developmental path, i.e., acquisition stages.
Secondly, formal instruction does not suppress the natural tendencies in second language acquisition, and

Thirdly, the differential effect of formal instruction appears to be limited to classroom-like tasks, where the focus is on form rather than natural communication.

3. The Study

3.1 The Research Question

Considering the foregoing conclusions, the present study attempts to answer the following question: does formal instruction of English in a purely foreign context eliminate some stages or forms of negation? Put differently, as a result of focus-on-form and/or conscious-raising (Rutherford, 1996; Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Ellis, 1995), which may lead learners to fewer hypotheses about the target forms and structures (Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith, 1985; Long and Robinson, 1998; Spada, 1997), does the development of English negation in a typical foreign language classroom involve fewer negation stages or forms than naturalistic L2 acquisition?

3.2 The Research Hypotheses

Given the fact that the subjects of the present study (see 3.3 below) had a considerable time of English instruction (3 years of formal instruction for the first group, and 6 years for the second, and the classes were four times a week for forty-five minutes each) (Stern, Burstall, and Harley, 1975; Collier, 1989; Hakuta, Butler and Witt, 2000), the following two hypotheses were tested in order to answer the research question:

H1: "No/not+V" negation does not occur in the production of the Saudi learners of English as a foreign language after three years of formal instruction.

H2: "Don't+X" negation (unanalyzed don't) does not occur in the production of the Saudi learners of English as a foreign language after six years of formal instruction.

3.3 The Subjects
Sixty-four Saudi Arabian male students learning English as a foreign language were drawn randomly from a number of 9th grade and 12th grade classes. Each grade group was represented by 32 students. The 9th grade subjects (mean age: 15 years old) had three school years of formal exposure to English, and the 12th grade (mean age: 18 years old) had 6 years. The subjects of the study were typical classroom learners of foreign language since they entirely depend on formal instruction as L2 input in their acquisition process; i.e., they had no access to the target language community or native speakers. Furthermore, they were taught through the traditional audio-lingual method (Larsen-Freeman, 1986: 31-50). Consequently, natural interaction necessary for L2 development (Long, 1996) was lacking in and outside the classroom for these learners. English classes were four times a week for forty-five minutes each.

3.4 Data Collection

The subjects had two tasks, a translation task, and a free-writing task (composition). In the translation task, they were asked to translate seven Arabic negative sentences in the spaces provided on their answer sheets. The sentences contained familiar structures, forms, and vocabulary. In the free-writing task they were asked to write two fifty-word compositions on the topics “My Hometown” (a description task) and "A Story You Know" (a narrative task) The translation task yielded 224 sentences for each group (7 X 32). The free-writing tasks yielded 64 negative sentences by the 9th grade students and 155 negative sentences by the 12th grade students.

3.5 Methods and Procedures

The “cataloguing approach”, as suggested and used by Cazden, Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (1975), and Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (1978) was employed. The negative forms in nominal and verbal phrases were catalogued for each subject to determine the proportion of each form to the total number of negatives, including

*While both tasks test learners’ productive ability, translation requires both the decoding of the stimulus sentence and the encoding of the translation. Hence, the subjects’ performances approximate natural speech production, see Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, 29.*
nominal and verbal negation. As for nominal negation, when a noun phrase, an adjectival phrase, or an adverbial phrase is negated but the required copula is missing, it is counted as "no/not + N", but if it is negated by don't, doesn't or didn't it is considered as "don't + N" (i.e., as an instance of "unanalyzed don't"). When the copula is supplied it is counted as cop + neg (i.e., copula-negation type). As for verbal negation, the catalogued forms are "no/not + V", "don't + V" (i.e., "unanalyzed don't"), "aux +neg", and "analyzed don't".

3.6 Findings and Discussion

In the translation task, the 9th grade subjects used the "correct" negative operators, i.e. cop neg, aux neg and analyzed don't 57% of the cases (129/224), and the 12th grade subjects 73% (162/224). However, the results were much less in the composition task for the two groups, 11% and 21% respectively.

Table 1. Distribution of Correct Negative Forms in the Translation and Composition Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th>12th Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 224</td>
<td>n = 64</td>
<td>n = 224</td>
<td>n = 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct Negation</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>129</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>136 / 288 = 47%</td>
<td>195 / 379 = 58%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 1 shows, both groups of subjects performed better on the translation task than on the free composition task. The difference between the performances on the two tasks was statistically significant (\(X^2 = 11.62, \text{df} \ 1, \ p < 0.01\), critical value 3.841). Although translation does not involve focus on forms, it is a habitual practice in the EFL classroom, in both teaching and testing; it is a familiar testing format for learners (Brown, 2000: 125). This may explain the better performance of both groups of subjects on the translation task, as compared to the free-writing task. On the other hand, the difference
between the correct negation of the two groups in both tasks (136/288, 47% vs. 195/379, 58%) was not statistically significant ($X^2$ 0.4458, df 1, $p < 0.01$, critical value 3.841). More precisely, the advanced group (12th grade students) did not do significantly better than the lower group (the 9th grade students). This indicates the Saudi learners' poor attainment of English negation after three and even six years of formal study. The fact that the 9th grade learners rely mainly on "not", with some occurrence of "no", for their negation, while the 12th grade learners use the "unanalyzed don’t" suggests that the two Saudi groups of students are still in the first and second negative stages, respectively.

**Table 2. Distribution of the Negative Forms in the Translation and Composition Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negation Form</th>
<th>9th Grade Translation</th>
<th>9th Grade Composition</th>
<th>12th Grade Translation</th>
<th>12th Grade Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no/not + X</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cop + neg</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aux + neg</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanalyzed don’t</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyzed don’t</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breaking the "no/not + X" negation into its exact types, i.e. whether "X" is a nominal element or a verb (see Table 3 below), the 9th grade subjects used "no/not + N" 10% (23/224) in the translation task, compared to 8% (5/64) in the composition task. This may be due to the tendency of beginning Arab learners of English to delete the copula (Kharma, and Hajjaj, 1997; Noor, 1996). Analysis of the copula forms in non-negative (affirmative) constructions in the compositions of the 9th graders confirms this very observation; the copula (Be) was deleted 63%. The advanced learners tend to delete the
copula far less than the beginning learners do. This explains the limited use of “not/no + N” by the 12th grade subjects in both tasks; 2% (4/224) in the translation task and 2% (3/155) in the free-writing task.

Table 3. Distribution of the Negative Forms in the Translation and Composition Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
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<th>12th Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 224</td>
<td>n = 64</td>
<td>n = 224</td>
<td>n = 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. no/not + X</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no + V</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not + V</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no + N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not + N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. unanalyzed don’t</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t + V</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t + N</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference in the two percentages of the 9th grade subjects in the two tasks, however, could be attributed to the elicitation procedure as well (Ellis, 1994; Kabayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Tarone, 1985). Translation tasks artificially increase the learners’ reliance on L1 (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). Using a written translation test of eighty Spanish sentences, Taylor (1974) found that beginning learners produced more transfer errors than the intermediate ones who tended to overgeneralize more. This may explain why the 9th grade subjects used “don’t + N” fewer, but “no/not V” more than the 12th grade subjects in both tasks. While the 9th graders used “don’t” 25% in the verbal negation in their compositions, compared to only 7% in the translation task, they used “don’t” 5% in nominal constructions,
resulting in “don’t + N” negation, 5% in the composition task and 3% in the translation task. Such sentences include “My city is don’t very big”, and “I am don’t young”, I is don’t pupil, and Ali is don’t here. This indicates that "don't" was used as if it was "not", or a variant of it.

These findings may suggest the following:

1) “no/not + X” and “don’t + X” may coexist in the early stage(s) and be used interchangeably (Littlewood, 1984; Lightbown and Spada, 1993).

2) The learners may have just started reorganizing their interlanguage negation system under the hypothesis that “don’t” is another negative operator in addition to "not", but they cannot sort the two out yet. This conclusion is corroborated by the observation that the emergence of “don’t” at this stage (9th grade) is exhibited by its high proportion in the immediately following stage (12th grade). In the translation task, “don’t +X” accounted for 23% of their total negative sentences; “don’t+N” 11% (25/224), and “don’t + V” 12% (29/224). In the composition task, they produced 155 negative sentences 29 of which were of “don’t + N” (29/155, 18%), and 65 contained “don’t + V” (55/155, 39%). Instances of “don’t + X” combined together form 57%, while all “no/not + X” forms (where X = N/V) comprise only 16%; “not + N” 3 times (3/155, 2%), “not + V” 26 times (26/155, 17%), and “no +V” only 4 times (4/155, 2%).

The use of the “cop + neg” and "aux neg" by both groups dropped sharply in the free writing task, compared to the translation task. Cop neg by 9th grade students dropped from 30% (68/224) in the translation task to 3% (5/64) in composition task, and from 28% to 10% (15/155) by their 12th grade counterparts in the corresponding tasks. For the 9th grade, aux-neg dropped from 19% (42/224) in the translation task to 3% (2/64) in the composition task. The 12th grade subjects produced 51 aux-neg sentences in the translation task (51/224, 23%) but only 9 sentences (9/155, 6%) in the composition task. Table 4 summarizes the use of aux-neg and cop-neg by the subjects.
### Table 4. Distribution of cop+neg and aux+neg in the Translation and Composition Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th></th>
<th>Composition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} Grade</td>
<td>12\textsuperscript{th} Grade</td>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} Grade</td>
<td>12\textsuperscript{th} Grade</td>
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<td></td>
<td>n = 224</td>
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<td>n = 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation Form</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cop + neg</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aux + neg</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decline of the percentages of the use of the negation forms, and of the aux- and cop- negations particularly in the writing task for both groups is understandable, if not expected, inasmuch as the difference between the two elicitation techniques is well established (Ellis, 1994; Kabayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Tarone, 1985; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982).

The relatively low proportions of the correct use of “cop neg”, “aux neg”) and “analyzed don’t” (see Table 2) in the compositions of the two groups reflects the minimal effect of instruction on the communicative use of the language forms which free writing requires.

### 4. Summary and Conclusions

The present study has examined whether formal instruction of English in a purely foreign context can eliminate some stages or forms of negation, or enhance their development. “No/Not + V” and "don't + X" negation forms were found in the production of all subjects of the study. While "No/Not + V" was more abundant in the lower group (grade 9 students), “Don’t + X” (i.e., unanalyzed don’t) was disproportionate in the production of the more advanced group (grade 12 students.) That is, the “No/Not + V” form, which has been

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*If the “analyzed don’t” were counted in terms of the do- support negation (all occurrences of analyzed and unanalyzed don't), we would get the following statistics. The 9\textsuperscript{th} grade students used " don’t" correctly 47.5% (19/40) in the translation task but only 11% (2/18) in the composition task. The 12\textsuperscript{th} ( grade) students used it correctly 49% (49/100) in the translation task but only 9% (9/98) in the composition task.*
observed to be persistent in the subjects' interlanguages even after three years of instruction (the 9th grade), gradually gives way to “don’t + X”, which becomes dominant in the following stage (the 12th grade).

Furthermore, the use of the negative forms by all subjects in the two groups was better in the translation task than in the free writing task.

The findings of the present study suggest the following conclusions:

1) Learners' use of the English negative forms does not support either of the two research hypotheses.

1a) \(H_1\): “No/not + V” negation type was observed in the production of all the subjects of the study, contrary to the prediction of hypothesis one. The ratios of "No/Not+V" to the other forms of negation are 0.35 (74/214) and 0.09,5 (33/346) for the 9th grade students and the 12th grade students, respectively. A chi-square value of 35.06 (df =1, p < .01, critical value 3.841) indicates that the difference in the usage of "No/Not + V" between the 9th grade students and the 12th grade students is statistically significant.

1b) \(H_2\): “Don’t + X” negation type was observed in the production of the advanced (12th grade) learners, contrary to the prediction of the second research hypothesis. The ratios of "Don't+X" to the other forms of negation are 0.15 (37/251) and 0.58 (140/239) for the 9th grade students and the 12th grade students, respectively. A chi-square value of 48.72 (df =1, p < .01, critical value 3.841) indicates that the difference in the usage of "Don't + X" between the 9th grade students and the 12th grade students is statistically significant.

1c) A chi-square value of 78.28 (df =1, p < .01, critical value 3.841) indicates that the difference between the "No/Not + V" and "Don't + X" in the production of the Saudi students (in the 9th grade and the 12th grade) is statistically significant (see Table 5).
Table 5. Chi-Square Values for "No/Not V" vs. "Don't X"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade</th>
<th>12th Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/Not+V</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't+X</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2=78.28, \text{df}=1, \ p<.01, \ \text{critical value of } X^2 = 3.841\)

2) While the 9th graders can be placed appropriately in the first negation stage, i.e., the stage of "no/not + V", the 12th graders are categorically at the second stage of negation, i.e., the stage of the "unanalyzed don't".

3) After three years of instruction, "not + V" has not disappeared. Although the persistence (and extensive use) of the "not + V" form in learners' interlanguages can be attributed to natural developmental processes, L1 negation system, as was mentioned earlier, can have a role as well. Arabic is a language of preverbal negation where the negative particles (laa, lam, and lan in Standard Arabic and ma in the non-standard Arabic varieties) occur before the verb (Al-Tarouti, 1991). Schumann (1979: 29) maintains that for "speakers with native languages that have preverbal negation, two forces promote the "no/not V" form: 1) natural development and 2) [interlingual] interference". L1 transfer as a working force in the acquisition of L2 negation system by formally instructed learners is well attested in the L2 literature (Littlewood 1984; Gass and Selinker, 2001).

4) The overuse of "don't + V" negation by the 12th grade students after six years of instruction can be attributed directly to natural development processes because it has no equivalent in their L1 (Arabic). That is, it is caused by intralingual interference of 'do' as a helping verb needed in negative and interrogative constructions. A plausible explanation for the overuse of "don't" is that the learners may have been working with the hypothesis that it is a variant of "not". Contextual factors of EFL, such as lack of sufficient input in and outside the classroom, of course, help
prolong the use of "incorrect" forms, such as the "unanalyzed don't".

5) Formal instruction does not suppress natural tendencies of acquisition; developmental path of the acquisition of negation ensues despite the focus and the sequence the second language classroom instruction provides. That is, the stages of acquiring negation are immutable and their order cannot be altered by formal instruction (Pienemann, 1998). Furthermore, formal instruction can aid the development of learners' conscious knowledge about the target language for classroom practice and activities, e.g., drills on forms, and passing language tests (Krashen, 1976; Turner, 1979), but has marginal effect, if any, on the use of forms in natural discourse i.e., real communication (VanPatten, 1992). Nunan (2000), for example, candidly says: "We had spent a lot of class time practicing negation in the context of likes and dislikes: He likes.... I don’t like.... She likes ... You don't like.... He doesn't like.... My students were great at manipulating the forms in class, but then in communication they used forms they had certainly never learned from me: No like this or No like that."

5. Pedagogic Implications

The poor attainment of English by the Saudi learners, ( AlTwaijri, 1982, Al-Ahadyib, 1991, Zaid, 1993) as it is clearly evident by the unsatisfactory learning of negation by the subjects of the present study, should urge us to take serious measures to improve the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia, taking into account the following observations and principles touched upon in the present paper.

(1) The learning of a particular form, as was previously mentioned, does not take place over a short period; it is a long drawn out process requiring constant attention, from both the teacher and the learner. Further, language acquisition is not just internalizing one form at a time but requires constant attention to a number of forms all competing for time and resources within the learner's interlanguage. Therefore, the attention given to any one form
needs to be fully justified to the learner so he/she can perceive it indispensable for language acquisition as well as for communication.

(2) A form may not be learnable or teachable until a learner has reached a certain stage of development. Pienemann (Pienemann, 1998) suggests that certain forms can only be taught at certain stages in a learner's 'acquisitional career'. (This explains why many learners experience frustration with endless attempts to consciously acquire certain grammatical forms, but exhibit an inability to internalize for a long time.) The teaching of such forms may need to be delayed until the learners are at a stage where they have the time and the resources to notice the forms and thus can focus on them.

(3) Constant focus on English negative forms, and for quite some time, has not resulted, as the results of the present study indicate, in a full acquisition or error-free use of the forms. This may suggest the insufficiency of consciousness-raising in a purely foreign EFL context. It should be stressed, nonetheless, that consciousness-raising is not merely a presentation of rules and drilling (Master, 1995; Rutherford, 1996: 24). Rather, it is a process that requires ample and continuous communicative input (Lightbown, 1992) for the learner to 'notice' the target forms (Schmidt, 1993). When learners do 'notice' a feature in subsequent communicative input, acquisition can occur (Fotos, 1993; Lightbown, 1992; Schmidt, 1992). The Saudi context of EFL, as was mentioned earlier, lacks the communicative dimension (Zaid, 1993). Lightbown has suggested another factor for consciousness-raising to be effective (Lightbown, 1992; Schmid and Frota, 1986: 281). She reports that learners' motivation to acquire the forms to improve their communicative skills was an important factor for successful focus-on-form instruction. Although the present study has not considered the subjects' motivation, the Saudi students in general lack the motivation necessary for learning English as a foreign language (AlTwajri, 1982; Al-Shammary, 1984; Mulla, 1979).
(4) In view of the foregoing observations, an EFL program, including the teaching approach and material, must recognize the complexity of the acquisition process, the learner's built-in syllabus, the natural order of acquisition, the centrality of the learner's role in this process (Prabhu, 1991), and the communicative dimension of language learning and teaching. Specifically, more focus on negation in the curriculum appears to be warranted.

تطور تعلم النفي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

مناخ

تقارن الدراسة بين طلاب السنة الثالثة في المرحلة المتوسطة وطلاب السنة الثالثة في المرحلة الثانوية في المدارس السعودية من حيث استخدامهم لأدوات النفي في اللغة الإنجليزية. وذلك بهدف معرفة ما إذا كان تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في بيئة أجنبية يفتقر على تطور المراحل الطبيعية لتعلم النفي عن طريق الاكتساب الطبيعي (دون دراسة رسمية). وقد أثبتت نتائج الدراسة أن طلاب الصف الثالث المتوسط (الذين أمضوا ثلاث سنوات في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية) يستخدمون not كأداة النفي الرئيسية. في حين أن طلاب الصف الثالث الثانوي (الذين أمضوا ست سنوات في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية) يستخدمون (don't) كأداة النفي الرئيسية. فقد تبين من التحليل الإحصائي أن الفروق بين استخدام الأدوات من قبل المجموعتين لها تداخل إحصائي. وتعزز نتائج هذه الدراسة الرأي القائل إن التدريس لا يؤثر في التطور الطبيعي لتعلم اللغة الثانية. وأن أثر التدريس - في تعلم أدوات النفي، مثل - يكاد ينحصر في ممارسات الفصل الدراسي مثل أداء التمارين والاختبارات. في حين أن أثره في الاتصال الطبيعي (داخل وخارج الفصل الدراسي) يكاد يكون محدوداً. وهذا ما يؤكده الفرق ذو الدلالة إحصائياً بين أداء الطلاب في الترجمة، والتعبير الكتابي الحر (أدوات البحث).
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U.P.


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