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Trabajo Fin de Grado

An exploratory analysis of the use of contracted and uncontracted negative forms in relation to the variable age

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ABSTRACT

This undergraduate dissertation examines the use of contracted and non-contracted negative forms in a small-scale convenience sample UK-based population in relation to the variable "age". Taking as a starting point the concepts of contracted and non-contracted negative types, the use that these forms have in real life of people of different ages is analyzed using survey (questionnaire-based) techniques. Thus, this dissertation reports on the frequency of use between one form or another. Descriptive results show that such use does not vary significantly with age, indicating that young people (between 18 and 25 years old) and older people (60+) tend to use more often the negative contracted forms than the rest of age groups. So, the final conclusion is that both young and elderly people use Operator Contractions due to their speed and laziness in their daily language.

Key words: *contractions, negative forms, age, British English, frequency*

RESUMEN

Este TFG examina el uso de las formas negativas contraídas y no contraídas en una muestra representativa de nativos ingleses atendiendo a la variable de la edad de la persona. Tomando como punto de partida los conceptos de negativos contraídos, estudiados principalmente por Castillo González y los negativos no contraídos, estudiados por Ali, Zwicky y Quirk, se analizará el uso que estas tienen en la vida real de personas de distintas edades. Para ello y partiendo de la ayuda logística de un contacto académico realizando durante una estancia Erasmus, analizo los resultados de un cuestionario online que se administró a un total de 1883 personas mayores de 18 años. Así, los resultados señalan que la frecuencia de uso entre una forma u otra no varía significativamente con la edad, concluyendo que las personas jóvenes (entre 18 y 25 años) y mayores (60+) tienden a usar más las formas negativas contraídas. Así pues, la conclusión final es que tanto los jóvenes como las personas mayores tienen a contraer el auxiliar en las formas negativas debido a su rapidez y pereza a la hora de hablar.

Palabras clave: *contracciones, negativos, edad, inglés británico, frecuencia*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Languages are constantly evolving and changing throughout time. Moreover, language changes across space and across social groups (Liberman, 2003). However, certain constants can be observed across specific groups. One example of language choice is the variation of contracted and uncontracted negatives based on the variable of "age". It is a known fact that age can affect the way in which people speak, as every generation has its speech patterns (see, for example, Horton et al., 2010).

Negation has always been a popular topic amongst linguists, philosophers, and psychologists alike, possibly because it is a phenomenon that can be seen throughout all human languages. Variation of contracted and uncontracted negatives in contemporary English has been an attractive topic for scholars. In the existing literature, it is explained that the resulting negative auxiliary is spelled with a final -*n't*: *isn't, hadn't, didn't, won't* (Quirk et al. 1985). *The Lexical syllabus* by Willis (1990) or *Current English Grammar* by Chalker (1984) report that several grammar books deal with issues related to using different negative elements and non-assertive words such as "not", "nothing", "nobody", "none", or "never", or studies related to double and multiple negations. Biber (1987), Hiller (1987), Kjellmer (1998), Biber et al. (1999), Tagliamonte & Smith (2002), Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew & Deckert (2002), and Castillo-González (2001, 2003), are the ones who deal with this topic in more depth. These authors have discussed the topic of negative contractions and uncontracted negatives in English in many of their writings. Thus, in the subsequent section, these writings were used to explain the main theme of this dissertation.

Therefore, this essay aims to further the study of the differences between contracted and uncontracted negatives in contemporary English and the contraction of the auxiliary verb in negative sentences. Specifically, it aims to explore how a small-scale, convenient sample of elderly and young people tend to use contracted and uncontracted negatives in their speech.

This dissertation will be organized as follows. First, I will provide a critical review of what theoretical studies state regarding contracted and uncontracted negatives. Secondly, I will describe the methods used for the study, and I will report on the results of a

small-scale empirical study of the use of contracted and uncontracted forms. Finally, I will provide a summary of the main findings, conclusions, and implications.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Contractions and Text-Types

The contraction *not* tends to show considerable variation when it goes from dialect to dialect. As an example of these variations in American English the contraction of *not* is much more widely accepted when presented in a written form than when the same situation occurs in British English (Castillo González, 2003: 678ff).

In Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew & Deckert's (2002: 83) study, *be* and *will* operators are more frequently found in contracted form in the written British English, whereas the operators *be* and *have* are the ones that are most frequently used in American English. Additionally, it is shown that the contraction variant of the operator *will* is almost absent, and it appears that in New Zealand English it is clearly preferred to use the uncontracted variant of *not* in every context (Hundt, 1998; 125-129).

The multiple *Not*-Contractions for the first person singular present of the verb *be* also have some geographical influences regarding the way they are implemented. For instance, the form *aren't* is most frequently employed in British English, whereas the form *ain't* is the one which most preferred in American English and some other varieties of the English language (cf. Quirk et al., 1985: 129). Nonetheless, in declarative sentences, *ain't* can be accepted as the contracted variant of *am not* in British English (Yaeger-Dror et al., 2002: 83). However, it is important to highlight the fact that *ain't* and *aren't* are often associated with lower-class speech by some individuals (Freeborn, 1986: 12). Additionally, the form *Aren't I?* is popularly heard in American English in locations such as New England and the Upper Midwest, whereas *Ain't I?* may be seen as standard in locations within North Central States as well as being extremely popular everywhere with the exception of the Upper Midwest (cf. Malstrom, 1963: 285ff).

Furthermore, there are some Midland and Southern dialects in Scotland, and certain American English ones, where the form *ain't* can also be seen as the standard for *isn't, aren't, haven't,* or *hasn't.*

The choice between contracted and uncontracted negatives relies largely on the type of text on which they are implemented. Some academics such as Fries (1940: 8) state that the use of contractions is much more frequent throughout spoken texts, like conversations, than in written text. Therefore, in contemporary English, contractions are generally regarded as not suitable for written texts, and more commonly implemented in what may considered as colloquial speech. Linguists have explained that the constant use of contractions during conversations can be attributed to the fact that they help to create fast and easy productions (Castillo González, 2007).

2.2 Contracted and uncontracted negative forms

Contracted negatives refer to verb contractions that end in −'nt. According to Castillo González (2007), negatives in English can be contracted in two different ways: Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions. In the former type of contraction, the operator is cut and tied to the previous word. Meanwhile, *not* is used in its complete form. For this reason, the emphasis of the phrase lies on the negator instead of the operator. Some examples of this type of contraction are: *'s not* (for both *is not* and *has not*), *'d not* (for both *had not* and *would not*), or *'ll not* (for both *will not* and *shall not*).

As opposed to the Operator Contractions, there is an additional way of forming contractions called *Not*-Contractions. These are the types of contractions where *not* is cut down to *n't*, losing its stress and being merged to the operator. This term is used by several scholars such as Ali (1970:73), Zwicky (1970:327), Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1595), among others. However, other authors such as Lieselotte Anderwald (2002) refer to them as "contracted negative" or "contracted negation." Some examples of this type of contraction are: *aren't, haven't,* or *hadn't.* Castillo González (2007: 13) summarizes in a table called "Types of operator negation in PDE" how the uncontracted negatives, operator contractions, and *not*-contractions are distributed in present day-English, based on the

previously mentioned operators. It is important to note that some of them do not permit the three options for negation. Furthermore, the *not*-contraction type can be implemented with the 16 operators, whereas operator contraction is only allowed by *be* (in its present form), *have, will, would* and, *shall.* On the other hand, uncontracted negatives are formed by the term "operator", which can be used as a way to refer to all kinds of auxiliary verbs as well as the verbs "be" and "have" when they are seen functioning as lexical verbs. This author (2007: 13) further states that the multiple operators used in present-day English that may be followed by the negative participle *not* are the following:

All forms of 'be' (am, is are, was, were)

All forms of 'have' (have, has, had)

All forms of 'do' (do, does, did)

Will and Would

Shall, Should and Ought to

Can and Could

Must, May and Might

Dare, Need and Used to

When these operators are combined with *not* without resorting to implementing contractions, they may be referred to as uncontracted negatives (Castillo González, 2007). The term "uncontracted negative" is one of the most commonly used ones within the literature of this topic, along with its synonym "full forms". Nonetheless, there are some authors, such as Jacobson (1980: 50), Huddleston (1995: 420), and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 799), who may call uncontracted negatives by other terms like "main-verb negation" or "analytic primary negation."

2.3. OpeC/NotC and Text-Types

The choice between Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions present in multiple text-types of documents has been dissected in multiple studies, with Biber et al. (1999) being amongst the most popular ones. Biber et al. (1999) have done research on the implementation of Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions in a repertoire of texts from the LSWE (*Longman Spoken & Written English*) Corpus, settling on the fact that Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions are more likely to be implemented in spoken texts, such as conversations and fiction, whereas Uncontracted Negatives are more likely to occur in written form.

Biber et al.'s (1999) designed a table which demonstrates how *Not*-Contractions are more commonly used in comparison to Operator Contractions when the four kinds of register types (Conversation, Fiction, News & Academic texts) are analyzed. This is the situation with all operators except for the operator *be*; in terms of said Operator Contractions are more commonly used in Conversation, Fiction and News.

Additionally, another interesting result found from Biber et al's (1999) study is the fact that *Not*-Contractions with the operators *have, will* and *would* are uncommon when referring to academic texts, whereas they are frequently used in conversation and fiction.

For this study, they designed a table in which the different types of Uncontracted Negatives and Negative Contractions in Contemporary English are shown, as well as their percentages.

2.4 Operator Contractions vs. Not-Contractions: selection aspects

Not-contractions are usually preferred with the operators that permit the speaker to use both types of contractions. The multiple forms of the verb "be" act as exceptions, and operator contractions predominate with them. An example of this can be:

I haven't rather than *I've not*

I won't rather than *I'll not*

I wouldn't rather than *I'd not*

Except

They're not rather than *They aren't*

The previously explained and described inclination for *Not*-Contractions in the English language may be attributed to the cross-linguistic prevalence of suffixation over prefixation. Greenberg was the first scholar who explored the predominance of suffixes over prefixes in his 1957 article "Order of Affixing: A Study in General Linguistics." Then, Spair (1921) restated that "of the three types of affixing — the use of prefixes, suffixes, and infixes — suffixing is much the commonest" (reference from Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins 1990: 1).

Most languages tend to have a basic word order within their structures. Such basic word order is established depending on how the three main elements of the clause structure (subject, verb, and object) organize themselves (Castillo González, 2007). Greenberg first introduced this perception in 1963, during his quest to find the properties shared amongst all of the human languages through the act of paralleling different data extracted from some of them. This author established a succession of linguistic, universally accepted rules grounded on some connections between the basic word order patterns and the order of the elements found within the NP (Noun Phrase) and the VP (Verb Phrase), including the adjective and relative clause order according to nouns, the auxiliaries related to the main verbs, the prepositions related to nouns, including the position of negative particles about the finite verb and the implementation of affixes in connection with stems (Castillo González, 2007).

According to Greenberg (1963: 73-113) there are six possible language types:

Table 1: Syntactic Structures

SVO: Subject - Verb - Object
SOV: Subject - Object - Verb
VSO: Verb - Subject - Object
VOS: Verb - Object - Subject
OSV: Object - Subject - Verb
OVS: Object - Verb - Subject

These syntactic structures can further be simplified into VO (Verb – Object) and OV (Object – Verb) languages using the order of the verb and the object as the main criterion. Regarding the position of negative elements, the negative units tend to come before the finite verb in the OV languages. However, as Castillo González (2007: 42) states, negative elements usually appear after the finite verb in VO languages.

Over the years, linguists worldwide have been studying the regularity of affixes in multiple languages, resulting in most of them agreeing that there is a tendency for suffixation rather than prefixation within the wording of the world. When the multiple restraints that may affect the choice between the two types of contractions have been wholly and adequately analyzed and studied, it is timely to evaluate whether Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions are used at random or not in the enduring situations. The answer to this question may be a negative one (Castillo González, 2007: 42). For example, the intention of avoiding vagueness is a highly probable influence on whether to implement Operator Contractions or *Not*-Contractions. As previously explained in Table 1, the forms like *'s*, *'d* or *'ll* represent the contractions for *is* or *has, had* or *would*, and *will* or *shall*, respectively. Therefore, in such cases, *Not*-Contractions are usually preferred since they assist the speaker in ensuring that the expressions hold no vagueness (see also Kjellmer, 1998: 181f).

Only nine forms of operators permit the implementation of the two types of contractions: *am, is, are, has, had, will, would,* and *shall.* For this research, the operators that

will be analyzed in depth are *be*, and its variants alongside *have*, since they are the operators included in the questionnaire that this research primarily focuses on. The *be*-operator and the *have*-operator will be studied in the following section.

2.5. Forms that Allow both Operator Contractions and Not-Contractions: Be/ Have

For this research, the operators that will be analyzed are *be*, and its variants alongside *have*. In almost every sentence we produce, some variation of the operator *be* appears, which means that it is one of the most widely used operators in English. For this reason, it is worth analyzing the use of the operator *be*. As explained in section 2.2, Castillo designed a table called "Types of operator negation in PDE" (Castillo González, 2007: 13). This table shows that the forms of the operator *be* permit three manners of negation, which are those that correspond to the present indicative: *are not, is not,* and *am not.* Other scholars such as Dillard (1980), Freeborn (1986), Anderwald (2002), and Hughes and Trudgill (1996), among many others, affirm that the operator *be* acts in a different way when compared to the rest of the operators, thereby corroborating that operator *be* most frequently uses Operator Contractions over *Not*-Contractions.

Moreover, Hiller (1987) also agrees with this theory in the *Survey of English Usage Corpus (SEU)*. In numerous figures, Castillo González (2007) reflected the representation of *Not*-Contractions and Operator Contractions explained in Hiller's selection of the *SEU Corpus*. The figures designed by Castillo González (2007: 69) clearly show that the operator *be* varies when compared to the rest of the operators regarding the choice of Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions. It is important to highlight in this dissertation two of the most important figures that he designs in his analysis: "Percentage of *Not*-Contractions in Hiller's (1987) breakdown of the *SEU* corpus" and "Percentage of *Not*-Contractions in Hiller's (1987) breakdown of the *SEU* corpus." Therefore, it is clear to see that, for instance, if a speaker were to face the options (1a-b), they would most likely choose the first option, due to the fact that *Not*-Contractions with the opera-

tor *be* may be seen as *"weaker or milder in negative force"* when compared to Operator Contractions (Bublitz 1992: 562). Moreover, he explains it with the following examples:

a. *He said she's **not** hungry.*

b. b. *He said she **isn't** hungry.*

According to Hazen (1996), the reason behind the preference of the operator *be* for Operator Contractions is that the forms like *she's not* sound more natural compared to others like *she isn't.* As mentioned above, the operator *be* is used in most sentences. However, the operator *have* is no less, as it is used in most sentences. Thus, the following operator that will be analyzed for the purpose of this study is *have*. In present-day English, it is possible to see *have* within negative sentences shown in one of the subsequent forms:

Uncontracted Negatives: *have not, has not had not.* (This study will focus on its present form)

Operator Contractions: '*ve not, 's not, 'd not.* (This study will focus on its present form).

***Not*-Contractions**: *haven't, hasn't, hadn't.* (This study will focus on its present form)

Compared to the operator *be*, *Not*-Contractions are more frequently used than Operator Contractions when referring to the operator *have* (Castillo González, 2007). The reason that stands out the most for this preference is the fact that '*s* and '*d* act as contractions for other operator forms, as in the case of the third person singular of the verb *be* (*is*) and *would,* respectively.

As Forsheden (1983) states, "one of the most obvious reasons for such PDE preference with have is that '*s* and '*d* are also contractions for other operator forms, such as the third person singular present indicative of the verb be (is) and would respectively".Thus, to avoid potential ambiguity problems, speakers tend to choose the *Not*-Contractions like *hasn't* and *haven't* much more repeatedly.

2.6. *Will* and *Would*

As it has been previously stated, *will* is one of the operators that shows the possibility to be contracted with the subject and the negator of the sentence alike. Despite this fact, the operators *will, would* and *have* as well tend to be paired most frequently with *Not*-Contractions (Forsheden, 1983: 27f). Nonetheless, the form *'ll not* is much more commonly used in comparison to the form *won't*, in some varieties of the English Language, for instance, Scottish English and Northern English, which are locations where Operator Contractions have greater presence than *Not*-Contractions (Castillo González, 2007).

The operator *will* has been contracted throughout the English language's entire history. Throughout the Old English and Middle English time periods, *will* used to be contracted with the pre-verbal negator *ne* (*ne + willan > nillan*). FromEarly Modern English and forth *will* started being contracted with the sentence's subject to create an Operator Contraction. However, at this moment in time, contractions like this type only took place with the issues whose ending was with a vowel, for example *Ile* (for *I'll*) or *youle* (for *you'll*) (Castillo González, 2007). Thus, in Early Modern English, Operator Contractions with the operator *will* usually were formed with *-le*, as opposite to Present Day English where it is written as *'ll* . Additionally, a particularity of the operator *will* that can be pointed out is that it possesses a vocalic disagreement between its affirmative form (*will*) and its *Not*-Contraction equivalent (*won't*), where it wouldn't be expected to use a form such as *willn't*.

Similar to the other operators analyzed so far, *would* permits the implementation of the negative contractions that are implemented in Standard and Present Day English, although Operator Contractions are very rarely used with *would + not* (Biber et al., 1999: 1128). This is very likely due to the ambiguity factor as it has been repeatedly mentioned before since the contracted variant *'d* may be used for both *had* and *would.*

Initially, *would* was used as the past tense of the verb *will* and had the same functions as its corresponding present form (Castillo González, 2007). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest proof of the implementation the Operator Contraction

form of the operator *would* is dated back to the late sixteenth century. However, in contrast to Present Day English, the operator *would* was contracted as '*ld*, a form that stayed present all the way into the early eighteenth century, which was the moment when the contraction form '*d* was implemented into the English language (Pyles & Algeo, 1993: 204).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the first occurrence of the Operator Contraction with *would* was during Early Modern English times. Nevertheless, slowly but surely, the *Not*-Contraction with the operator *would*, which made its first appearance during the seventeenth century in the form of *wou'not* (Brainerd, 1993: 180), started to become more and more commonly used, until it reached the point where it eventually become the preferred contraction from for the English speakers starting from the eighteenth century onwards.

2.7 Age distinction in the use of contraction forms

The most prominent implementation of contracted forms can be most commonly found within the younger community when referring to the speaker's age. Petyt (1987: 85) analyzed the use of contractions in the particular town of West Yorkshire, like Bradford, Halifax, and Huddersfield. He designed a figure in which individuals from age 10 to 20 are the ones who most frequently use contractions (57%). However, from 30 and 40, contractions slightly increase but never get as high as initially (33%). Additionally, the percentage of contractions used by people in their thirties is never higher than 50%.

3. METHODS

3.1 Methodology

During my Erasmus stay in Newcastle, I took a module called *Language and Change Dealing with Data*. In this course, both Erasmus students and students at the university were asked to carry out a survey of different British people. The subject teachers prepared a questionnaire with several questions related to contracted and uncontracted negative forms, and then the teachers distributed it to the students. However, for an Erasmus student who did not know so many people there, it was a bit complicated to survey so

many people. Still, the teachers understood my situation and provided me with data that other students at the university had taken in. Furthermore, because this analysis aimed to study this issue of contracted and uncontracted negatives with the variable of age, apart from sending the questionnaire to people in different parts of England, it also had to be sent to people of different ages.

Thus, the small-scale study on negation forms used a questionnaire (see section 4.2.) that was administered to a convenience sample of British volunteers who were contacted via the Internet thanks to the support provided by a personal contact that I made among British students during my Erasmus stay in the United Kingdom.

The study designed aimed to identify how frequently these forms are in three different age groups to assess whether age is a determining factor when using one form or the other:

- Elderly people (60+)
- Middle-aged people (30-50)
- Young people (18-30)

Moreover, in order to see the differences and/or similarities between the implementation of Uncontracted Negatives and Contracted Negatives (Operator Contractions and *Not*-Contractions), the participants were asked to choose between two different options, which were:

1. (a) It isn't as big   (b) It's not as big

2. (a) I haven't got anything to hide   (b) I've not got anything to hide

3. (a) Their football isn't the same   (b) Their football's not the same

4. (a) He isn't in a bad way   (b) He's not in a bad way

All participants were sent the same questionnaire online. However, I had more problems getting the results from older people because, although my teachers helped me, they found it challenging to fill in the list of questions online. Once I had the answers from all the participants, I made an excel table (see Appendix 6.1) with all the results.

This helped me to be able to make the subsequent figures (Table 3 and Table 4) and to make my own conclusions.

In the following table, Table 2, I have listed the information of the sample population that responded to the questionnaire, as well as their age.

Table 2

AGE	N° of participants	%
Elderly People (60+)	472	25.07%
Middle-Aged People (30-50)	576	30.59%
Young People (18-30)	835	44,34 %

The total number of participants amounted to 1,883. However, this study will only focus on two groups, Elderly People and Young People, not taking into account the information obtained regarding Middle-Aged People, since I initially hypothesized that differences would be more marked between the older and younger generations. This has been motivated by the idea that generations with a gap in between each other can express more clearly and precisely the changes in mentality and education that society has experienced, and therefore better show trends in the use of language.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After having previously explained how I have collected all these data, in this last section, I will analyze them and present the results obtained.

Appendix 6.1 shows the percentages for each age range. So, having made the correct calculations, it can be shown that Operator Contractions accounted for around 55%, and proved to be the ones that are most commonly used in people's daily speech in comparison to *Not*-Contractions (40%), no matter their age. The results also showed that the frequency in which a respondent used contractions, in general, may fluctuate as they grow, but it tends to stay in relatively constant evolution.

Figure 4 (see Appendix 6.2) shows all the data obtained from the questionnaire, but, as it was previously pointed out, the only information that will be taken into account in the present study will be the results from the Elderly People and Younger People.

In Tables 3 and 4, comparative percentages are shown.

Table 3

Age Percentages (Elderly People)
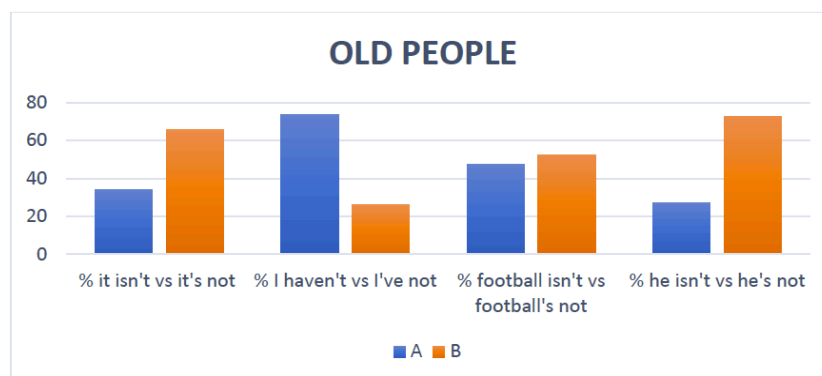
As shown in Table 3, the comparative percentages across types of contraction in the group of elderly people indicate that they prefer to use Operator Contractions. This is especially noticeable in contracted forms such as "it isn't" vs. "it's not" and "he isn't" vs. "he's not", where over 60% of the senior population surveyed showed a preference for operator contractions.

Table 4

Age Percentages (Young People)

In Table 4, the group of young people appeared to prefer Operator Contractions over Not-Contractions. This is more visually represented with the results obtained from the selection between "it isn't" (22%) vs. "it's not" (78%), "he isn't" (26%) vs. "he's not" (76%) and "football isn't" (39%) vs. "football's not" (60%), where over 60% of the respondents showed a preference for operator contractions.

On the one hand, within the Elderly People group for the first selection of options A and B, option B was preferred (61%), that is, the use of Operator Contractions. The preferred option was A (76%) for the second selection of options, which was *Not*-Contraction. In the third round, option B, the Operator Contraction, scored 45%, but it did not even account for half of the responses. It is worth highlighting that in this third round, the difference between the two options was very close (45% *vs.* 50%), with only a 5% percent difference between them according to the descriptive statistics. Finally, for the fourth choice, option B the Operator Contraction, amounted to 63% of all the responses, Based on these results, it can be deduced that the Elderly People that participated in this questionnaire were more likely to implement Operator Contractions over *Not*-Contractions in their daily speech patterns. It can be hypothesizes that contractions may serve as social class markers. In England, ain't is considered non-standard and illiterate, since lower-class speakers use it as well as some educated people indicatin the use of an informal register (cf. Jørgensen 1979: 38, Freeborn 1986: 12, or Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew & Deckert 2002: 82, among others). For this reason, it might be possible that because the

elderly did not receive the same education as young people today, they continue to use contracted negatives as a mark of non-education.

On the other hand, it can be stated that within the Young People group, for the first selection of options A and B, option B was the preferred one (70%), which was the Operator Contraction, as also happened in the group representing the Elderly People. So what? What does this mean? Regarding the second selection, over half of the participants in the group of Young People mainly chose option A, which was *Not*-Contraction (65%). The preferred option was option B (60%) for the third choice, which was the Operator Contraction. It is worth noting here that this option was also the smallest margin of difference within the Young People group, albeit marking a stark contrast when compared to the Elderly People one (for Young People, the difference was just over 20%). Finally, for the fourth selection round, the preferred option was option B (65%), the Operator Contraction. Thus, it can be deduced from these descriptive results that the Young People tend to choose and implement Operator Contractions more than Not-Contractions, as was also the case of the Elderly People. In agreement with Petty's analysis of the use of contractions in some towns of West Yorkshire, such as Bradford, Halifax, and Huddersfield (seeing Figure 1), the younger ones appear to contract the operator more, possibly because of speed and laziness in speaking and not because they do not know the correct form. When comparing the results found from both groups, it is easy to notice that their speech patterns are very similar, especially regarding the fact that both groups tend to use Operator Contractions more than *Not*-Contractions.

Although within the group representing Young People, the differences between the two options presented are more perceptible, this might be attributed to the fact the Young People (44.3%) has more participants than the Elderly People group (25.07%) (see Table 2). In other words, these results might indicate that people usually use Operator Contractions in their daily speech, in comparison *Not*-Contractions, no matter their age. This statement can be supported by previous studies such as Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 800), in which they purposely emphasize the motivation behind the choice between the variants previously explained. These authors claim that, when it comes to conversational contexts or others that may be considered colloquial speech, complete forms tend to sound more "unnatural" than how contractions are seen. Therefore, con-

tractions are seen as the preferable option for these contexts. Notwithstanding this, they do point out the reasoning behind the implementation of complete forms, which is more usually done when the speaker is trying to emphasize the negation of the sentence or phrase and, thus, for these situations, the speaker chooses to use an uncontracted negation since it gives more clarity to the utterance.

Additionally, other scholars such as Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert (2002: 81) state that complete forms are most often chosen before contractions when it comes to negations in settings such as the ones they call "informative registers," which are the ones that include but are not limited to news reports, tutorials, instruction manuals, or written descriptive texts. On the other hand, they also mention other term: "interactive registers," which are the ones that include but are not limited to conversations and / or written dialogue of some sort. These "interactive registers" are settings where contractions to express negation are much more common (Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert, 2002: 81).

The study on which these claims are based was based on datasets of American English and British English texts dated all the way from the year 1814 to the more the recent year of 2000. These texts (see Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert, 2002), were made up of a variety of different materials such as written and spoken ones as well as different registers, such as literary texts, telephone conversations records, and educational lectures, among others (Castillo González, 2007).

These studies go along the lines of the initial hypothesis for this study, as stated in the introduction of this dissertation. Taking into account the current state of society alongside with the current state of speech patterns, phrases, slang, vocabulary, etc., it is reasonable to believe that contractions can be seen as the more "natural" option. This is due to the fact that they are the ones that are implemented most often, especially in American English and in "interactive registers". This can also be attributed to the fact that contractions are often connected with what is considered "informal speech", which in turn is the most common type of speech in daily life. For these reasons I believe that contractions are the preferred choice when it comes to conversations, because since it is the speech variable that is more commonly used, it automatically makes it the one that will feel more natural to the speakers in question.

When it comes to full form negations, they do not necessarily feel "unnatural" but they are frequently seen as the choice that would be implemented solely when the speaker wants to emphasize the negative aspect of what they are saying. Additionally, full form negations are used when the speaker wants to make sure that is no ambiguity in their speech, in order for all the participants of the conversation, dialogue, etc., to fully understand and comprehend what is being said. On top of that, usually, whenever "full forms" are being used the register in question is often considered as "formal speech". This is because "full forms" are often associated with formality and other materials that may be considered more salient in colloquial speech (Academic English UK, 2021). This is yet another reason as to why "full forms" are not part of the usual daily speech or what may be considered "natural". Therefore, it may sometimes be seen as an 'odd' way of speaking due to the fact that it is not the most frequent method of speech. This is a characteristic that can be present for multiple people, without age being a huge altering factor to it.

5. CONCLUSION

Though language is known as a concept that is forever evolving, it is clear to see that the use of contracted and uncontracted negatives is still relevant at present, no matter the age of the person. Though there are multiple forms of operators that can be used to implement the two forms of contractions (which are *am, is, are, has, had, will, would* and *shall*), this small-scale survey seeks to highlight that the two most common ones are *be* and *have* operators, with their respective contractions.

This study has been done to 1,883 people over 18 years old and has shown that Operator Contractions appear to be the ones that are most commonly used in people's daily speech in comparison to *Not*-Contractions, no matter their age. It was also observed that due to the slight ambiguity that certain contractions may bring (such as the contraction form *'s* which, depending on the context of the sentence, may be the contraction for the verb *is* or the verb *has*, as well as the contractions forms *'d* and *'ll*). *Not*-Contractions are the most commonly implemented when the speaker wants to make the sentence and/ or phrase completely clear for the receiver.

This study has helped to explore people's varied speech patterns as well as to understand variation of language use in speech across ages. It can be concluded that one of the reasons behind people's frequent choice of implementing negative contractions into their daily spoken language is speed and laziness as well as, as mentioned previously, they are seen as the more natural option.

6. ANNEXES

Appendix 6.1. Age Percentages

AGE			1. it isn't *vs* it's not	%	2. I haven't *vs* I've not	%	3. football isn't *vs* football's not	%	4. he isn't *vs* he's not	%
	Overall Results	A	559	29,68667021	1315	69,83536909	816	43,33510356	533	28,30589485
Total number	1883	B	1324	70,31332979	568	30,16463091	1067	56,66489644	1350	71,69410515
	Older (60+)	A	162	34,3220339	349	73,94067797	224	47,45762712	128	27,11864407
	472	B	310	65,6779661	123	26,05932203	248	52,54237288	344	72,88135593
	Middle-Aged (30-50)	A	167	28,99305556	407	70,65972222	266	46,18055556	166	28,81944444
	576	B	409	71,00694444	169	29,34027778	310	53,81944444	410	71,18055556
	Younger (18-25)	A	230	27,54491018	559	66,94610778	326	39,04191617	239	28,62275449
	835	B	605	72,45508982	276	33,05389222	509	60,95808383	596	71,37724551

Appendix 6.2. Full Questionnaire Results

Figure 4

Negative Contractions questionnaire including Age.

		1. It isn't vs. It's not.	%	2. I haven't vs. I've not	%	3. Football isn't vs Football's not.	%	4. He isn't vs. He's not.	%°
Overall Results (TN=1,883)	A	559	29.60%	1,315	69.84%	816	43.34%	533.0 0%	28.31%
	B	1,324	70.31%	568	30.16%	1,067	56.66%	1,350	71.69%
Older (60+)	A	162	34.32%	349	73.94%	224	47.46%	128	27.12%
	B	310	65.68%	123	26.06%	248	52.54%	344	72.88%
Middle-Aged (30-50)	A	167	28.99%	407	70.66%	266	46.18%	166	26.82%
	B	409	71.00%	169	29.34%	310	53.82%	410	71.18%
Younger (18-25)	A	230	27.54%	559	66.95%	326	39.04%	239	28.62%
	B	605	72.46%	276	33.05%	509	60.96%	596	71.38%

(Leftmost spanning label: **Age**)

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