

TO THE TEACHER

Lesson 6 Negatives and Middle Words

To the teacher -- random thoughts from experience...

Errors

Negatives in sentences with visible X-Words are fairly straightforward. Most errors will be

- using *no* instead of *not* "I can no come to class."
- word order "I no can come to class."
- double negatives
- adding *not* to the main verb, especially with have. "She hasn't a car." Instead of "She doesn't have a car." Not a big problem except that it shows the student doesn't really grasp the difference between an X-Word and a Main Verb.

Don't, Doesn't, and Didn't are addressed in Lesson 9

Not or n't?

According to *COCA, *not* and *n't* are used with equal frequency at this point. In spoken English *n't* is used almost twice as much as *not*. The contraction even made up about 13% of the *not/n't* middle words in COCA's Academic English database.

Pronunciation

remind students that

- X-Words are generally not stressed, *I can work late.*
- but an X-Word + NOT is stressed. *I can't work late.*
- We must hear the "t."
- The "t" is often linked to the next sound.

Affirmative (willeat)

John will eat his spi-nach. */ jah noowih lee tiz spih næch /
(Ma -ry had a li-ttle lamb)

The negative: (wonteat)

John won't eat his spi-nach. / jah nooWOHN Tee tiz SPIH næch /

*apologies to IPA users and apologies for the limitations of my Midwestern ear

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Activity: You can use index cards to practice this.

| | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Sure | I | can | work | tonight. |
| ↓ | | ↓ | | |
| Sorry | | can't | | |

Step 1: 5 students. Each holds a card. Each says their word to read the sentence smoothly (without stress on "can").

Step 2: T prompts for Negative, students 1 and 3 flip their cards. The ss say it in the negative changing the sentence stress.

Step 3: Volunteer stands in the back of the room and says *I can work tonight.* OR *I can't work tonight.* (the seated students can't see the speaker)

Seated students give a thumbs up for Affirmative / Thumbs down for negative.

Step 4: Use any other pair of sentences that works for your group. eg, I will give you twenty dollars. I won't give you twenty dollars.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------|---|--|-------|------|---------|
| | 1 | 2 | | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Side 1 | SURE | I | | can | WORK | toNIGHT |
| Flip side | SOrry. | I | | CAN'T | WORK | toNIGHT |

Middle Words --Which ones to teach---

Source: *COCA

- **not**, **n't**, and **never** are the most common middle words
- **just** is a close 4th. It has two meanings
 - 1) very recently, in the immediate past.
I'm not hungry; I just ate.
Our flight just arrived.
 - 2) as a minimizer/hedger/apologizer = only or simply (I don't know the real linguistics term)
I just want to say thank you for everything.
I just say that you should think twice about it.

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I just don't know.

A. Who was there? B. It was just me.

Other common collocations:

- We really think that you should take the job.
- Sleeping 8 hours a night is also a good idea.
- My sister is very shy. She has always been that way.

Note: have/has/had + DTN often occur with **always, already, never**.

- George has always been a good student.
- He has already finished his homework.
- He has never been late for class.

*COCA is the Brigham Young University Corpus of Contemporary American English , 520 million words 1990-2015

corpus.byu.edu/coca