REAL ENGLISH
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肯定的 or 否定的 どちらの表現を選択？

　新年度１回目は、英語としての肯定もしくは否定の表現について、語句の選択はもちろんのこと、その場に合った表現を使えるようになるための一考察を紹介します。

Positive versus Negative Phrasing

I recently had to write an email … to communicate my message, I had to choose between:

　　　I will be absent from today's meeting.　　　　　versus　　　　　*I won't be able to attend today's meeting.*

Notice that the meaning doesn't change – *NO MEETING FOR ME TODAY* – but the sentences 'feel' different.

　　　　　What is your impression of these two options?　　　Which one would you use?

The difference between the two sentences has to do with positive versus negative phrasing.

Even though they say the same thing … and in each case the meaning of the message is 'negative' – *I will not be at the meeting* … one of the sentences has positive phrasing: *I <u>will be absent</u> from today's meeting* … while the other one uses negative phrasing: *I <u>won't be able to attend</u> today's meeting* …

　　　　　Does it matter?　　　　Let's explore and find out.

Positive: *Unfortunately, <u>he is</u> feeling <u>a bit sick</u> today.*　　　*Negative: Unfortunately, <u>he isn't</u> feeling <u>very well</u> today.*

Positive: *Come on … <u>English is</u> pretty <u>easy,</u> isn't it?*　　　*Negative: Come on … <u>English isn't</u> that <u>difficult</u>, is it?*

Positive: *Well, that movie <u>was pretty boring</u>.*　　　*Negative: Well, that movie <u>wasn't very exciting</u>.*

　　I'm disappointed - that movie <u>was more boring than I expected</u>.　　*I'm disappointed - that movie <u>wasn't as exciting as I expected</u>.*

Positive: *Clearly, he <u>failed to</u> consider the consequences.*　　　*Negative: Clearly, he <u>didn't</u> consider the consequences.*

Notice that with these samples, the grammar shifts between positive and negative …

　　[*he is – he isn't*]　　[*English is – English isn't*]　　[*the movie was – the movie wasn't*]　　[*he failed to (he did fail to) – he didn't (he did not)*]

　　　　　… but there is also a <u>vocabulary</u> change [*sick - well*]　[*difficult – easy*]　[*boring - exciting*].

For the next set of sample sentences, the grammar is positive in all cases … so what is different?

#1: Positive: *Wonderful – <u>everyone is present</u> in class today.*　　　*Negative: Wonderful – <u>nobody is absent</u> from class today.*

Here the focus of the statement shifts between *'everyone is present'* (which uses a positive term: _everyone_ *is*) and *'nobody is absent'* (which uses a negative term: _nobody_ is) … but they mean the same thing. A speaker sometimes uses these two phrasings together to make a longer and more complete statement about something; this way, the positive and negative are combined: *Wonderful – everyone is in class today … nobody is absent.*

                    Wonderful – nobody is absent from class today … everyone is here.

#2: Negative: *Amazing – she has never gotten lost in this city.*   **Positive:** *Amazing – she always knows her way around this city.*

Likewise, there is a shift in these two sentences as well between *'never getting lost'* … which says that this bad thing (*getting lost*) _never_ happens … and *'always knowing her way'* … which says that this good thing (*knowing the way*) _always_ happens.

And, as above, you could double them up: *Amazing – she has never gotten lost in this city … she always knows her way.*

How about these?   There are many combinations of negative and positive.   Are the meanings clear?

        You don't need to be there until 9 am.   … don't need to be there until …

        You need to be there from 9 am.   … need to be there from …

        If you don't arrive by 5 pm, we cannot guarantee your seat.   If you don't arrive by – we cannot …

        You have to arrive by 5 pm in order for us to guarantee your seat.   have to arrive by – in order for us to …

        If you arrive after 5 pm, we cannot guarantee your seat.   If you (do) arrive after – we cannot …

        We can only guarantee your seat if you arrive by 5 pm.   … can only – if you (do) arrive by …

        It has to be simple enough for everyone to understand.   has to be simple enough … for everyone to understand

        It cannot be too difficult for anyone to understand. can't be too difficult … for anyone to understand

        If it is simple enough, then anyone can understand.   If it is simple enough … then anyone can understand

        If it is too difficult, then no one can understand.   If it is too difficult … then no one can understand

        If it is too difficult, then not everyone can understand.   If it is too difficult …then not everyone can understand

        Unless you pay your overdue fees, you cannot receive your certificate.   Unless you pay … you cannot …

        Until you pay your overdue fees, you will not receive your certificate.   Until you pay … you will not …

        If you don't pay your overdue fees, you cannot receive your certificate.   If you don't pay … you cannot …

        Once you have paid your overdue fees, you can receive your certificate.   Once you have paid … you can …

        If you pay your overdue fees, you will receive your certificate.   If you (do) pay … you can …

Next REAL ENGLISH: May 2024!

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too difficult ・・・・ too easy ・・・・ just right

more explanation please ・・・・ more samples please ・・・・just right

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email to: **telesaomori@gmail.com**

◇新年度御入学おめでとうシーズンです。新入生が入ってきて夢ある学びがスタート。いろいろな場所で新人の加入や組織の入れ替わりにより、さらなる活性化がスタート。当学会も事業に参画してくれるフレッシュな人材を大募集です。（文責 伴）