

# *n't*, p. 1

---

based on Zwicky, Arnold M. and Geoffrey K. Pullum (1983) "Cliticization Vs. Inflection: English *n't*." *Language* 59: 502–13.

“An important point about doing grammatical research on a well-known language is that there can still be surprises.”

Standard analysis of *n't*: it is a cliticized (“contracted”) form of *not*. In other words, (1a) derives from (1b) by cliticization.

- (1)   a.     You haven't been there.  
      b.     You have not been there.

A closer look, however, shows that *n't* has all the properties of an affix, and none of the properties of a clitic. All but one of the properties below are taken from the textbook. (A couple of the properties in the book, prosodic and phonological properties, are irrelevant, as there are no rules to test.)

**Clitics have “freedom of movement”; affixes do not.**

The term “freedom of movement” as used in the textbook is a bit vague, but consider the effect of Subject-Aux Inversion.

- (2)   a.     Haven't you been there?  
      b.     \*Have not you been there?  
      c.     Have you not been there?

Subject-Aux Inversion does not move *not* along with the auxiliary. But *n't* is treated by the syntax as part of the auxiliary. This is affix behavior, not clitic behavior. Note that cliticized auxiliaries do not exhibit this affix-like behavior.

- (3)   a.     You could've been there.  
      b.     \*Could've you been there?

**Clitics can attach to material already containing clitics; affixes (since they are morphological entities) are pre-syntactic and cannot attach to material containing clitics.**

This one is not in the textbook, but is in Zwicky and Pullum. Compare the example with a bona fide clitic (4a) and the example with *n't* (4b).

- (4)   a.     I'd've been there if I'd known about it.  
      b.     \*I'dn't be doing this unless I had to.

## ***n't*, p. 2**

---

**Clitics have freedom of host selection; affixes have no freedom of stem selection**

*N't* can only attach to finite auxiliaries (items belonging to the category Infl). On the restriction to finiteness, note the ungrammaticality of:

- (5) a. Would the police have not been informed?  
b. \*Would the police haven't been informed?

Zwicky and Pullum also point out that the inability of *n't* to attach to non-auxiliaries cannot be said to be the result of *not* being stressed. Note the following, where the underlined element is stressed.

- (6) a. Well, for her not to understand is the last straw.  
b. \*Well, for hern't to understand is the last straw.

**Clitic-host combinations may not have idiosyncratic meanings; stem-affix combinations may.**

Zwicky and Pullum observe that the relative scope of negation and modality is idiosyncratic.

- (7) a. You mustn't go home. = MUST (NOT (YOU GO HOME))  
b. You can't go home. = NOT (CAN (YOU GO HOME))  
c. You can not go home. ambiguous

**Clitics may neither trigger nor undergo morphophonological or suppletive alternations, affixes may.**

**Clitic-host combinations may not have arbitrary gaps; stem-affix combinations may.**

For these two, note the chart on the following page. There are three gaps in the paradigm, and five forms which exhibit morphophonological alternations.

***n't, p. 3***

Positive		Negative		
orthographic	phonetic	orthographic	phonetic	expected
do	[duw]	don't	[downt]	*[duwnt] or *[duwənt]
does	[dʌz]	doesn't	[dʌzn̩t]	
did	[dɪd]	didn't	[dɪdn̩t]	
have	[hæv]	haven't	[hævnt]	
has	[hæz]	hasn't	[hæzn̩t]	
had	[hæd]	hadn't	[hædn̩t]	
can	[kæn]	can't	[kænt]	*[kænənt]
could	[kʊd]	couldn't	[kʊdn̩t]	
may	[mey]		---	
might	[mayt]	mightn't	[maytn̩t]	
shall	[ʃæl]	shan't	[ʃænt]	*[ʃælənt]
should	[ʃʊd]	shouldn't	[ʃʊdn̩t]	
will	[wɪl]	won't	[wownt]	*[wɪlənt]
would	[wʊd]	wouldn't	[wʊdn̩t]	
dare	[der]	daren't	[derənt]	
must	[mʌst]	mustn't	[mʌsənt]	*[mʌstənt]
need	[niyd]	needn't	[niydn̩t]	
ought	[ɔ:t]	oughtn't	[ɔ:tn̩t]	
am	[æm]		---	
are	[a:r]	aren't	[a:rənt]	
is	[ɪz]	isn't	[ɪzn̩t]	
was	[wʌz]	wasn't	[wʌzn̩t]	
were	[wɜː]	weren't	[wərənt]	
---		ain't	[eynt]	