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Nahajec, Lisa

Negation-Form, Function and Effect

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Effect that the use of negation has on understanding texts can be powerful. In non-fictional texts such as... people into believing there are problems that need solving even if there didn't appear to be any problems at all.

Lisa Nahajec MA BA(Hons)
Department of English
School of Music, Humanities and Media
University of Huddersfield

Research questions:
Negation has the interesting property that allows us to conceptualise and understand the world in terms of what doesn't happen or what attributes something does not have. It is not only that we can conceptualise negative states, but that these states are both relevant and meaningful. This research takes a theoretical approach and aims to answer the questions of what textual appearance negation has, how it functions to instantiate and deny or reject a previous assertion, and what effect this has in natural language.

Form

Types of negators

Syntactic
My dog is not barking.

Morphological
John unfastened his shoes.

Inherent/lexical
The bus failed to arrive on time.

Conditional
If the bus had arrived late I could have caught it.

Modals
He should have moved.

Negation functions to deny or reject a previous implicit or explicit assertion. It can also instantiate the opposite positive counterpart from which the hearer/reader constructs a mental representation of that which is being rejected.

Function

Negation has the interesting property that allows us to conceptualise and understand the world in terms of what doesn't happen or what attributes something does not have. It is not only that we can conceptualise negative states, but that these states are both relevant and meaningful. This research takes a theoretical approach and aims to answer the questions of what textual appearance negation has, how it functions to instantiate and deny or reject a previous assertion, and what effect this has in natural language.

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For further details on this research see: Nahajec, L. (2009 forthcoming) ‘Negation and the Creation of Implicit Meaning in Poetry’ Language and Literature.