

Negation in English Contemporary Linguistics

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Keywords negation, negative polarity items, thematic roles, speech acts.

Abstract

A diachronic perspective upon the syntax of negation indicates a troublesome process as regards the position of the Negator and its relationship with the other sentence constituents. The paper aims to provide a brief presentation of the main approaches and to bring further evidence in favour of or against some of them. We claim, therefore, that postverbal negative constituents form a representational chain with an expletive operator in the Specifier position of the NegP (Haegeman, 1995) not only in English, but also in Romanian. However, as regards clause structure, the NegP cannot occupy a position between Agreement Phrase and Tense Phrase, due to counter-examples in which the Verb group contains several modal or aspectual auxiliaries (Radford, 2003). The study is completed with semantic and pragmatic perspectives concerning the impact of local and sentential negation upon the assignment of thematic roles and the illocutionary force of the speaker's utterances.