

DISCOURSE, CULTURE AND COGNITION: THE ROLE OF NEGATION IN THE CREATION OF COHERENCE IN PRESS AND ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to argue that negation plays a crucial role in the creation of discourse coherence understood as a process which involves the creation of a textual world. Negation modifies information present in discourse or evoked from propositions in discourse, thus performing different discourse functions in which frame knowledge plays a crucial role. A proposal is put forward for a classification of the cognitive-discourse functions of negative propositions in argumentative discourse with illustrations from extracts from opinion articles, headlines and advertisements in Spanish and British newspapers.

KEY WORDS: Advertising discourse, argumentation, coherence, frame, negation, text world.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el papel de la negación en la creación de la coherencia discursiva, entendida como un proceso en el que se crea un mundo textual, en artículos argumentativos y en anuncios publicitarios de prensa en inglés y español. La negación contribuye a la creación de la coherencia al modificar información de proposiciones que se encuentran el discurso o evocada por estas proposiciones, siendo fundamental la evocación de esquemas cognitivos. Proponemos una clasificación de las funciones de la negación en la que se tienen en cuenta los aspectos culturales, cognitivos y textuales que determinan la elección del enunciado negativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: discurso publicitario, argumentación, coherencia, esquema cognitivo, negación, mundo textual.

1. INTRODUCTION

The turn towards the analysis of pragmatic and discourse factors of language use in recent decades has also meant a shift in approaches to the study of negation, which for years has been strongly influenced by the formal semantics tradition. Recent works in pragmatics and discourse analysis have shown that negation is not a simple logical operator with a semantic function within a single propo-

sition, but a complex discourse-pragmatic phenomenon which performs a wide variety of textual and pragmatic functions both in conversation¹ and written text. Two main approaches to the study of negation from a discourse-pragmatic perspective are relevant to the discussion of the present article. The first approach can be defined as the textual approach, with studies focusing on the functions of negation in argumentation (Ducrot), the relation between negation and the kinds of speech acts performed by negative utterances in speech and writing (Givón, “Understanding”, “Grammar”; Tottie) and the different discourse-textual functions performed by negative utterances (Leinfellner; Pagano; Jordan). To this it must be added that the analysis of the relation between negation and discourse functions such as contrast, emphasis and correction has a long tradition (see, for example Jespersen; Werth, *Focus*, among others). The second approach can be defined as the cognitive approach, with recent studies which focus on the cognitive dimension of negation and the motivations for its use in discourse (Givón, “Understanding”, “Grammar”, *Syntax*; Werth, “World”, “Prose”, *Text*; Hidalgo Downing, *Negation*, “Creation”).

In the present article I take up the cognitive approach to negation, more specifically, the text world model, in order to explore the role played by negation in the construction of discourse coherence in extracts from press and advertising discourse. The argument put forward is that a cognitive approach to negation in discourse explores a dimension which has not received sufficient attention in textual approaches to negation, namely, the relation between the negative proposition or expression and the activation of relevant knowledge frames. As I argue in the sections which follow, this relation forms part of the construction of discourse coherence understood, following Werth (*Text*), as a process in which we construct a “world” in which the propositions make sense.

2. COHERENCE AS A COGNITIVE PHENOMENON

It has been pointed out that talking about coherence means talking about text as process rather than product, and that there are different factors which intervene both in its production and comprehension (see, for example, Gernsbacher & Givón 341). Different studies of coherence tend to focus on these factors separately, or to focus either on the production or on the comprehension sides separately. One of the factors which determine the complexity of coherence is the fact that it is related to two different linguistic and cognitive processes, one knowledge-driven and based on the lexicon, and another grammar-driven, based on relations of connectivity and recurrence of elements in discourse, such as anaphors. The

¹ See, for example, the number of *Journal of Pragmatics* devoted to negation (Yagh-Dror). “The question of how people know what is going in a text is a special case of the question of how people know what is going on in the world at all” (de Beaugrande 30).

study of the latter is related to an approach to coherence as a property of texts, and addresses the study of coherence as grounding and anchoring in discourse, while the former requires the view of coherence as “a cognitive phenomenon in the mind that produces and comprehends the texts” (Gernsbacher & Givón 343). Coherence is a cognitive phenomenon in the sense that it involves a series of operations connected to short-term and long-term memory which “*impose or guarantee whatever coherence we find in the external text*” (Gernsbacher & Givón 343). In this sense, coherence may be seen as a process of enriching the text by filling in the relevant frame knowledge in order to construct a text world. In the present article I follow the cognitive approach to coherence, and explain the role played by negation in this process of enriching or filling in the text world. The argument is that negation is a grammatical-textual feature that does not establish continuity in the texts in the way referents or connectors do, but rather, it establishes connections between text and the knowledge of the interlocutors. Such knowledge may be explicitly mentioned in previous discourse or it may be evoked by previous propositions or by the negative expression itself. This is what Werth (*Text* 127-130) describes as “negative coherence,” which establishes connections between propositions on the basis of antonymy and is associated to textual functions such as denial, contradiction and oppositeness. This type of coherence contrasts with “positive coherence”, which establishes connections between propositions on the basis of relations of synonymy, hyperonymy, metonymy and metaphor.

3. COHERENCE AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TEXT

In section 2 above I have mentioned the fact that the search for coherence may be understood as a process of enriching a text by filling in relevant knowledge frames. I wish now to explain how this process is described within a text world model of discourse before going on to analyse the function of negation within this process (see Werth, *Text*; Hidalgo Downing, *Negation*, “Creation”, “Minds”). I start by summarising some of the basic assumptions which characterise the text world model of discourse. First, the notion of “world” itself. Text processing and understanding is understood as a process by which we construct a “world” or mental representation of the text; this is observed by Givón, who, following Gernsbacher, argues that “text comprehension is synonymous with the construction of a structured mental representation of the text” (Gernsbacher & Givón 346). Similarly, Werth (*Text* 95) argues that “language is not just putting words together [...] Language is used in association with situations”, and situations are represented in our minds, whether real, imaginary or remembered. This process is dynamic and interactive, both in spoken and written language. This is clear in Werth’s definition of discourse: “A deliberate and joint effort on the part of producer and receiver to build up a ‘world’ within which the propositions advanced are coherent and make complete sense” (*Text* 95).

This quotation brings to the foreground the close relation between the concepts of world, coherence and joint negotiation of meaning, crucial aspects of





the view of discourse we are discussing. The term “world” is used technically in Werth’s model to refer to different cognitive domains which correspond to the various levels of discourse interaction, that is the discourse world, the text world and subworlds, which together form a hierarchical modal structure. We can try to summarise the main elements of the model by saying that the discourse world is the broader cognitive domain, and is fed from the immediate situation in which the interaction takes place. Participants in the discourse world don’t have to provide details regarding the deictic information of time, place and entities, since these are obvious from the immediate physical situation; they are mutually manifest to the participants. The textual world constitutes the next internal layer, and is a conceptualisation of the specific event which is in focus during the interaction; text worlds are deictic spaces, in the sense that speakers or writers have to indicate the deictic coordinates for the benefit of the reader or listener. Finally, there may be other domains internal to the text world, subworlds which arise as departures from the parameters which have been established in the text. Typical subworlds are shifts in the time and place coordinates, such as a flashback, or hypothetical or probability subworlds triggered by modals, conditionals and other world-creating predicates. Negation is a subworld which modifies information present in the common ground of the discourse, as I explain in detail in section 4 below. World-building and the construction of coherence take place at all these levels by setting the parameters that are necessary to provide enough information to participants.

World-building contrasts with the function-advancing component of discourse, or that component which makes a discourse move forward and is related to the main text function and text type. Thus, for example in a narrative, the function-advancing component makes the plot move forward and in argumentative writing it makes argumentation move forward (see Werth, *Text* 191; Hidalgo Downing, *Negation* 88-89).

The search for coherence may be defined first as a world-building process in which the different parameters are first set at the adequate levels of discourse, that is, the contextual information of the discourse world, the deictic elements of the text world and the variations introduced by the subworlds. This component of the search for coherence may be said to be related to the orientation of a speaker or reader in a discourse situation, identifying the participants, objects, time and location of the situation. This contributes to what is generally understood as the process of anchoring referents in discourse. Coherence is further pursued, as said above, by a process of enriching the text world which has been defined deictically. In this second component of coherence two aspects play crucial roles, the common ground and frame knowledge.

3.1. COHERENCE, MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMMON GROUND

The common ground is the information which speakers and hearers in a situation negotiate and accept as relevant for the ongoing discourse (Werth, *Text* 119). This information includes meanings which are manifested explicitly in the

discourse but also inferred and evoked meanings, as pointed out by Werth in the following quotation: “[The common ground is] the background knowledge necessary to understand not only the meaning of the words and sentences, but also the frames and inferences which they evoke” (“Prose” 197).

Information is updated in discourse by incrementation, by adding new propositions into the common ground or modifying previous information and enlarging the shared knowledge between participants; as Werth points out “Mutual knowledge is the result of incrementation” (*Text* 95). The types of propositions that are discourse specific are three: the propositions (p) which make up the text, the propositions entailed by (p) and the propositions evoked by the knowledge base (K). The knowledge base contains frame knowledge and relevant expectations and prototypes for given situations. The knowledge base is not a static, fixed system, “it is a dynamic and central processor which constantly assesses incoming information, relating it to other information in memory, comparing it, making and testing hypotheses about it” (Werth, *Text* 146). Shared knowledge can be divided into two main types: general knowledge, which includes cultural and linguistic knowledge; and mutual knowledge, which includes perceptual and experiential knowledge (Werth, *Text* 46). Cultural knowledge is “all the non-linguistic information available to individuals or groups living in a particular society” (Werth, *Text* 97). Cultural knowledge is organised and systematised in discourse in the form of frames (Werth, *Text* 97).

Discourse processing proceeds on the basis of what Werth (*Text* 149-151) defines as the principle of text-drivenness, that is, it is the text that indicates what knowledge and other aspects of context are relevant:

The relevant retrieval and selection of knowledge relevant to a given discourse must be text driven [...] It is reasonable to suppose that the text reveals the particular domains of knowledge, within which the particular item may be more readily traced than if we had to sort through the entire knowledge-base. (*Text* 150)

The retrieval and selection of the relevant information is not a passive process, but an active one carried out constantly by participants in situations. According to Werth text-drivenness is a double function, in the sense that either it evokes in participants’ minds information which is already part of their knowledge base or “it provides enough information for the fact to be inferred” (*Text* 150-151). Werth terms this process “accommodation.”

3.2. FRAME KNOWLEDGE

Once the deictic parameters have been set, the text world is fleshed out by means of evoking relevant knowledge frames, which fill in or enrich the basic references, often resolving ambiguities. Knowledge frames are cognitive structures which store information about personal experiences and socio-cultural behaviour. Fillmore defines the concept of frame as: “By the term “frame” I have in mind any system of





concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits” (141).

Thus, the concept *son* cannot be understood unless in relation to other concepts such as mother and father, daughter, family, etc. As pointed out above, the concept of frame is closely related to the notion of cultural knowledge, as frames are structures which organise and store this knowledge. Thus, a frame is “an area of experience in a particular culture” (Werth, *Text* 106) and it is also a “cognitive space, mapping out an experiential category” and containing assumptions and expectations about different situations.

The process by which frames are created is a process in which “speakers build up a repertoire of scenes which encapsulate the expectations about how particular situation-types will develop” (Werth, *Text* 104). Thus, although frames are also cognitive constructs, the difference with the concept of text world is that, unlike text worlds, which are individual instances of specific events or situations, frames provide generalisations or abstractions which are applicable to different situations. Werth describes this property of frames by saying that:

a frame is a sort of experience space [...] frames represent the distilled experiences of the individual and the speech community, centring on specific linguistic expressions. A linguistic expression, such as a word [...], will evoke the whole range of experience which that item is normally involved in. (*Text* 42)

The role of frame knowledge in discourse is crucial, as frames introduce the default elements or information which is taken for granted and assumed to be true by interlocutors. This information typically codes the information that is shared by interlocutors or assumed to be the case; this is what other authors such as Givón (“Grammar,” *Syntax*) call the presuppositions of a discourse: “text worlds seem to contain a mixture of pre-fabricated knowledge, originating in existing frames, and new, discourse-specific knowledge” (Werth, “World” 69).

4. THE ROLE OF NEGATION AND OF NEGATIVE ACCOMMODATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF COHERENCE

Within the modal structure of text worlds, negation is a subworld which contributes to the updating of information in the discourse by modifying information in the common ground. As argued by different authors (see for example Givón, “Understanding”; Werth, *Text* 250), negation does not just describe a negative state or event. Negation has a foregrounding function in discourse, in the sense that a previously mentioned, expected or assumed proposition is brought to the foreground and challenged in some way. Thus, Werth observes that “The essential mechanism is communicative: one does not comment on the absence of some situation unless its presence has been expected, asserted or presupposed” (*Text* 250). This is the basis of what is known as the asymmetricalist view of negation with regard to affirmation (see Horn 203). In this view, while affirmation does not necessarily presuppose previously mentioned or assumed propositions, negation sys-

tematically does so. Interestingly, as will be illustrated in the discussion which follows, it is not only the affirmative proposition that is evoked by negation, but a whole network of cultural knowledge and inferences. This is clear in expressions such as “non-smoking section,” which presupposes the culturally based assumption that the usual state of affairs—at least till recently!— is that people are allowed to smoke everywhere, and thus negation restricts or modifies this assumption.² The idiosyncratic nature of negative expressions is reflected upon humorously by the author of the following extract from an article published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*.³

[...] al entrar en el cuarto de baño, he visto sobre la repisa un desodorante en cuyo recipiente pone, con grandes caracteres, que no tiene alcohol. Supongo que tampoco tiene lejía, pero no pone que no tiene lejía, ni que no tiene gasolina. Lo importante, al parecer, es que no tiene alcohol. (*El País*, 17/12/2000)

Thus, this text illustrates the fact that negative expressions frequently used in our everyday life, such as “desodorante sin alcohol” (alcohol free deodorant) and other similar expression (cholesterol free, fat free and sugar free food, for example), deny assumptions and expectations which are in the common ground of the discourse. These assumptions and expectations arise from our knowledge of the world and of our culture and involve the activation of relevant frame structures. For example, our frame for “deodorant” may or may not contain the element “alcohol,” but it is very unlikely that it will contain the element “petrol.” This is also the reason why it may be informative to assert that a deodorant does not contain one of its possible default elements (alcohol), while it is uninformative to assert that a deodorant does not contain an element which does not form part of its frame structure.

Because negation usually presupposes an affirmative term or proposition, it is rarely used as a discourse initial utterance. Thus Werth comments that (1) b would be more unusual as a discourse initial utterance than (1) a:

- (1) a. A dog was barking.
- (1) b. A dog wasn't barking.

In the discussion which follows I argue that negation is used in discourse initial utterances such as headlines or initial sentences in articles in the press, be-

² See Jordan for the view that both affirmation and negation presuppose background information.

³ The newspaper texts analysed in this article have been taken from printed editions and web editions <<http://www.guardian.co.uk>>, <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk>> and <<http://www.elpais.es>>. In the cases in which the page number is not specified it is assumed that the web edition has been consulted.

cause an intertextual relation exists between the article and previous articles published on the same topic. Thus, negation modifies information which has been expressed in previous articles and newspapers.

4.1. NEGATION AND THE MODIFICATION OF INFORMATION IN DISCOURSE

Negative subworlds may modify function-advancing propositions or world-building propositions, or information evoked by these propositions (see Hidalgo Downing, *Negation* 149). I wish to illustrate these two types of discourse functions of negation with some examples from extracts from two opinion articles from *The Guardian* and headlines from *El País*. Additionally, I will also make reference to the denial of frame knowledge in advertisements.

In newspaper opinion articles, it may be argued that the function-advancing component is essentially argument-advancing, that is, it has the purpose of developing the argument presented in the article (see Werth, *Text* 191; Hidalgo Downing, *Negation* 88-89). Negation contributes to this function by either modifying a previously expressed proposition or by expanding on the content of a previous proposition (See Table 1 below).⁴ These propositions may or may not be contrastive. Contrast is usually indicated either prosodically or by the presence of lexical or structural markers of contrast. Negative propositions may also modify world-building information. In this case, negation may either deny assumptions about an entity which is present in the discourse, it may modify other world-building predicates (epistemic, hypothetical and cognitive) or it may modify frame knowledge. This proposal for a classification of the discourse functions of negation in argumentative writing is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. FUNCTIONS OF NEGATIVE PROPOSITIONS IN ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE FROM THE PRESS

MODIFICATION OF FUNCTION-ADVANCING PROPOSITIONS	MODIFICATION OF WORLD-BUILDING PROPOSITIONS
a. Modifying a proposition which is present in previous discourse by correcting it.	a. Modification of assumptions about an entity mentioned in previous discourse.
b. Modifying a proposition by expanding on its content (explicit or evoked information).	b. Modification of other world-building predicates (epistemic, hypothetical and cognitive domains).
	c. Modification of frame knowledge.

⁴ Pagano (258) classifies the textual functions of negative propositions into four types: denial of background information, denials of text-processed information, unfulfilled expectations and contrasts.

4.2. MODIFICATION OF FUNCTION-ADVANCING PROPOSITIONS IN ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE FROM THE PRESS

4.2.1. *Modifying a Proposition which is Present in Previous Discourse by Correcting it*

The examples below illustrate the function of negation as modifying information expressed in a previous proposition by correcting it:⁵

- (2) “In classical Arabic idiom the ‘cutting of hands and feet’ is often synonymous with destroying one’s power.” That is not how the Taliban read it, hacking away at limbs. (*The Guardian*, 10/10/2001)
- (3) Yet this formulation wilfully ignores the Palestinian position. That is not one of no compromise, but rather of no compromise on compromise. (*The Guardian*, 21/06/2001)
- (4) Mrs Tamir was particularly disposed to regard attempts by Israelis and Palestinians to arrive at something approaching a common account of events as doomed to failure. Look to the future, was her message. Yet, as one Israeli Arab intellectual recently put it: “It is not possible to build a future by merely looking forward; the future begins by [...]” (*The Guardian*, 21/06/2001)
- (5) This shaky global coalition offers a chance to do better in many places, through international joint action. It means demonstrating that human rights values are indeed universal and *not western*. (*The Guardian*, 21/06/2001)

In these examples the negative sentences “That is not how the Taliban read it” (2), “That is not one of no compromise” (3), “It is not possible to build a future by merely looking forward” (4), “and not western” (5) clearly modify and correct what has been said in the preceding text. It may also be the case that the negative sentence modifies information which has been mentioned not in immediately preceding sentences but in a preceding paragraph. This is illustrated in example (9) below, which I discuss in the section which follows.

A special case of modification of information mentioned in previous discourse is negation in headlines. As I said above, negation in headlines functions intertextually by modifying information which has either been mentioned in a previous article or a different newspaper, or it denies information which is in the common ground because it is evoked frame knowledge (see section 4.3.3. below). The examples below illustrate the denial of propositions which have been mentioned in previous articles and which the writer of the newspaper article assumes the reader is familiar with:

⁵ Cf. Tottie’s distinction (22) between “explicit” and “implicit” denials, by which she means denials which deny information which has been explicitly mentioned in previous discourse and denials which deny information which has not been explicitly mentioned previously.

- (6) EEUU no destruirá las últimas muestras de viruela. (*El País*, 24/04/1999)
- (7) Clinton no propone medidas concretas; pide diálogo contra la violencia escolar. (*El País*, 22/04/1999, 31)
- (8) Eurocontrol afirma que el colapso aéreo no puede atribuirse a la guerra de Yugoslavia. (*El País*, 22/04/1999)

In these examples, the negative expression modifies the expectation which arises from the preceding article referred to intertextually. An interesting point is that the negative form introduces the information it denies, so that it is not necessary for the reader to be familiar with the event being described in order to understand the piece of news. This is what Werth defines as negative accommodation, a phenomenon by which new information is introduced in the discourse by denying it (see Werth, *Text* 255; Hidalgo Downing, *Negation* 176-178).

4.2.2. *Modifying a Proposition by Expanding on its Content (Explicit or Evoked Information)*

Example (9) below illustrates the first two functions of negation as modifying function- advancing propositions by either correcting the propositions or by expanding on the content of the preceding proposition:

- (9) Hard-headed liberals have no problem in opposing the Taliban, Bin Laden and equivocators who start with a cursory side-of-the-cigarette-pack homily that says September 11 was atrocious before piling on the “buts” that imply the US had it coming. Hard liberals have always been very tough on the moral failings of the USA at home and abroad – without blurring distinctions between the Taliban and America. Hard liberals hold basic human rights to be non-negotiable and worth fighting for. They do not turn the other cheek, understand the other guy’s point of view or respect his culture when it comes to universal rights. Promoting liberal values everywhere from Burma to Saudi Arabia, Iraq to Chechnya is not neo-colonialism, but respect for a universal right to freedom from oppression. That was what Tony Blair’s conference speech implied. (*The Guardian*, 10/10/2001)

The negative proposition, “They do not turn the other cheek, understand the other guy’s point of view or respect his culture when it comes to universal rights,” expands on information mentioned in the preceding proposition by modifying assumptions which form part of cultural shared knowledge (turning your cheek, respecting his culture, etc.). The negative proposition which follows, “Promoting liberal values everywhere from Burma to Saudi Arabia, Iraq to Chechnya is not neo-colonialism,” modifies a proposition which has been mentioned in a previous paragraph in this same article, namely, the proposition: [...] “calling for greater understanding of other cultures and accusing secular liberals of neo-colonial, cultural supremacist attitudes towards some Muslim countries.” This shows that nega-



tion clearly has a textual-discursive function, since denials may refer back to information which has been mentioned at different points in the discourse or which is evoked by the discourse.

Negation in the examples discussed so far takes part in the creation of text coherence by contributing to the function-advancing component of the discourse. By doing so, negation modifies information which is in the common ground of the discourse and contributes to the development of the argumentation.

4.3. MODIFICATION OF WORLD-BUILDING PROPOSITIONS

As observed above, negation may also contribute to the creation of discourse coherence by modifying world-building propositions. World-building is closely connected to the descriptive function of texts, and, indeed, Werth (*Text* 198) points out that the dividing line between description-advancing and world-building is not clear, so that there is a certain degree of overlap between the two aspects. As explained in section 3 above, world-building has to do mainly with the setting of the basic parameters which define a text world (time, place) and the entities that people that world, and the departures from those parameters, what we have defined as subworlds. With regard to the descriptive function in texts, Werth points out that two types of descriptive function have world-building properties, which he calls identifying and framing functions:

There are three categories of description: identifying, individuating and framing. Identifying is a world-building process, individuation is description-advancing (since it serves to broaden and deepen our knowledge of a nominated entity), and framing adds further information about an evoked entity from memory. (*Text* 198)

In the present discussion, I am concerned with those propositions and expressions which perform identifying and framing functions, since they are part of the world-building process. Additionally, I will also make reference to propositions which contain world-building predicates, that is, epistemic, hypothetical and cognitive subworlds.

4.3.1. *Modification of Assumptions About an Entity Mentioned in Previous Discourse*

The identifying function is performed by linguistic elements such as relative clauses or other types of subordinate clauses, which enable us to identify the referent of a Noun Phrase. The following examples illustrate negative identification as part of the world-building process:

- (10) But that risks something worse — a patronising anthropological view of interesting natives who are not people like us, quaint in their time-honoured

habits that must remain undisturbed by outside influence (*The Guardian*, 10/10/01)

- (11) It is a kind of limp liberalism that will not defend its own most profound values. (*The Guardian*, 10/10/2001)

In examples such as these, the negative clause contributes to the world-building process by pointing out the absence of certain features in the referents; in this sense, negation is defeating an expectation or modifying an assumption that those features should be applicable.

4.3.2. *Modification of Other World-Building Predicates (Epistemic, Hypothetical and Cognitive Domains)*

Negation may also contribute to the world-building process by modifying propositions which contain other world-building predicates, such as modal auxiliaries and conditional clauses. This is illustrated by examples (12) and (13) below:

- (12) “If only people would just sit down and talk [...],” though conversation with Bin Laden is not on offer. All sane people worry that this war may not be proportionate, may not stop terror attacks or make life in Afghanistan better. But the pacifist position this time is exceptionally odd. (*The Guardian*, 10/10/2001)
- (13) Had negotiations been successful while Israel still had a government which could deliver there would have been no intifada, his account implies. Equally, if Barak had not been perversely set against meeting even minimum obligations in the territories, there could not have been the anger and mistrust which formed the tinder waiting for a spark. (*The Guardian*, 21/06/2001)

Negative epistemic and hypothetical subworlds introduce cognitive domains which present an alternative or counterfactual reality which contrasts with the status quo presented in the text world. This is clear in the counterfactual subworld of example (13). Negative modal subworlds have idiosyncratic properties of their own, as has been pointed out by Pagano (264). Thus, saying that *this war may not be proportionate, may not stop terror attacks* (12) seems to introduce the assumption that war in fact is not proportionate and does not stop terror attacks. In this sense, negative modal subworlds seem to form part of the process of accommodation, since they introduce the assumption which is denied in the same proposition.

4.3.3. *Modification of Frame Knowledge*

I have already pointed out that the relation between negation and frame knowledge is crucial in text processing. We can summarise this relation by quoting Werth as: “The frames set up the complex network of expectations which we might



hold about the set of topics under discussion; the text, by way of the negative subworld, informs us that these expectations have been departed from” (“Prose” 198).

While the activation of frame knowledge is carried out constantly when processing discourse, there are cases in which a negative expression clearly modifies culturally based knowledge which is collected in discourse in the form of frame knowledge. The following examples illustrate this kind of negation:

- (14) La homosexualidad no tiene origen genético, según los últimos estudios. (*El País*, 24/04/1999, 29)
- (15) Comer un huevo al día no supone un mayor riesgo para el corazón. (*El País*, 24/04/1999, 31)
- (16) Abolir la pobreza no es una utopía. (*El País*, 22/10/2002, 30)

It may be argued that the headlines in these examples modify assumptions which form part of general world knowledge or cultural knowledge, some of which are polemical, such as the fact that there is a genetic predisposition for homosexuality or the link between the intake of cholesterol rich food such as eggs and coronary disease. The information that is denied may also have been mentioned in previous articles in the press, so that an intertextual relation is created with these previous discourses, as explained above.

4.4. MODIFICATION OF FRAME KNOWLEDGE IN ADVERTISING

Advertisements are good examples of how the modification of frame knowledge by negative subworlds is used to the advantage of the senders and manufacturers of the product. Examples (17) and (18) are extracts from two advertisements of Halifax remortgages and AOL internet connection.

- (17) Halifax remortgages (*The Times*, 14/10/2000)
 - Absolutely no tie-ins
 - If you’re remortgaging, there are no valuation fees
 - No tie-ins or arrangement fees
- (18) AOL internet line (*The Guardian*, 27/09/2000)
 - No call charges
 - No need to change your phone line
 - No complicated restrictions
 - Completely free internet trial with no cost whatsoever
 - If you need help, don’t worry

The negative sentences in these texts do not just deny certain properties, but, more importantly, they also introduce information which is assumed to be the case and which, in order to be processed as coherent discourse, relies on the familiarity with knowledge of cultural aspects (mortgages and internet connections).

Additionally, these texts use this knowledge in order to disclaim competitors who have the properties which they negate, since the negative proposition introduces the assumption that the properties denied are the usual or more frequent case. Thus these texts assume that other companies:

- involve tie-ins, valuation fees and arrangement fees
- require call charges, oblige you to change your phone line, impose complicated restrictions, are costly, will make you worry and will provide no help

By means of an inferencing process, the reader deduces that Halifax and AOL offer better services than other companies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I have argued that negation contributes to the creation of discourse coherence in opinion articles from the press and in advertisements by modifying either world-building or function-advancing propositions. I have also argued that in the processing of the negative propositions the activation of relevant knowledge frames is crucial, since the negative proposition typically evokes an assumption or expectation which arises from shared knowledge of the world and cultural knowledge. I would like to conclude by saying that, in more general terms, I have tried to show that the complexity of negation as a discourse phenomenon requires an analysis which takes into account both textual-linguistic features and cognitive aspects of discourse processing, such as the organisation of cultural knowledge in frame structures and their activation in discourse, together with inferencing processes.

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