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## Reporting from a Character's Mind – Investigations on the Use of Negated Modals

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The present study investigates functions of modal negation in fiction. There are indications that negated uses of modals differ functionally from their affirmative counterparts (cf. e.g. Bergs 2008) or, more specifically, that there are prototypical contexts in which we encounter modals combined with negation. To date, this has not been investigated systematically.

One area worth exploring is subjectivity, which Verhagen (2000) defines as a narrative technique, namely the narrator reporting from a character's mind, either directly or indirectly, as illustrated by (1).

- (1) He **could not** bring himself to bear the irksome society that surrounded him. (NCF2: 1863)

The present study investigates whether subjectivity in fiction is partially created by means of modal negated verb phrases. The analysis is based on a 1.4-million-word dataset of the core modals *can*, *could*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, *may*, *might* and *must* as well as the contracted forms *'ll* and *'d*. These were extracted from the fiction corpora in the Chadwyck-Healey collection as well as from the BNC and covers modal use in British prose published between ca. 1500 and 1990.

First results show that authors indeed employ modal negated verb phrases to convey characters' beliefs, attitudes and inner struggles: *Not*-negation of modals is particularly common with verbs of cognition or communication (e.g. *think*, *know*, *say*, *tell*). Many uses are (semi-)fixed expressions of stance, such as *it might not be X* or *I should not* + verbs of cognition/emotion/communication.

As many of the modal contexts particularly prone to negation are sequences with first-person subjects, further analyses separate between direct speech and the narrative passages surrounding it in order to see whether modal negation plays a specific role, e.g. as a hedging or a discourse-structuring device, within fictional discourse.

**References:** • Bergs, A. (2008). *Shall* and *shan't* in Contemporary English – a Case of Functional Condensation. In G. Trousdale & N. Gisborne (eds.), *Constructional Approaches to English Grammar*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 113–143. • Verhagen, A. (2000). Interpreting Usage: Construing the History of Dutch Causal Verbs. In M. Barlow & S. Kemmer (eds.), *Usage-Based Models of Language*. Stanford: CSLI, 261–286.