



Negation in writing: The case of the cross-out

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Recent studies of spoken language argue that negation is a multimodal and interactional process. Negation is considered multimodal because speakers can negate using linguistic or gestural forms (Calbris 2005, Kendon 2004), and interactional because speakers negate to create interpersonal participation, ensure coherence, and establish mutual understanding (Cheshire 1999).

In the current study we take these considerations one-step further by addressing processes of negation in writing. The manuscript of Montesquieu's *L'histoire véritable* dates from the 1740s and is the result of a specific communicative encounter between *philosophe* (speaker) and secretary (writer). Taking an excerpt from this manuscript, we analyse how negation is expressed on the page. We demonstrate that negation is expressed both in linguistic forms (lexis and syntax) and 'para-linguistic' textual markings, such as the horizontal cross out. We show how this combination parallels the multimodal and interactional properties of negation in speech. Then we use analytic tools from cognitive linguistics to explain the effects of this combination at utterance and narrative levels of meaning construction.

This study hopes to underline some exciting aspects of negation, which is portrayed as a dynamic cognitive process that is independent of any specific modality. More generally, we bring support to a dynamic and multimodal view of language (c.f. Duncan *et al* eds. 2007, Müller 2008). While our study focuses at times on historical and literary practices from the Enlightenment period, we mitigate some of this specificity with broader considerations on negation through both speech and writing. Lastly, this study builds on our previous work that compares similar methods of meaning-construction in speaking and writing (Harrison & Connors 2008).

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