

# English *hope* vs German *hoffen*: Looking for a semantic-pragmatic motivation for Neg Raising

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Many languages display a certain tendency to attract the negation to the main verb, which should theoretically belong to the dependent clause: a speaker uttering ‘I don’t believe that p’ is typically taken to have conveyed ‘I believe that not-p’. Such lower-clause understandings of higher-clause negations are possible across certain predicates (*believe, think, want*) but not others (*realize, regret, deny*) in English and other languages. As Horn (1978) stated, “under certain conditions [...] a NOT in the embedded sentences may be moved in front of the main verb.” This phenomenon is called “negative raising” (NR).

- (1) a. **I don’t believe** that this is special  
b. = I believe that this is **not** special
- (2) a. **Ich denke nicht**, dass sie ihrer Mutter ähnlich sieht.  
b. = Ich denke, dass sie **nicht** ihrer Mutter ähnlich sieht

There seems to be a wide cross-linguistic agreement on which predicates show NR. In this research, however, the English verb *hope* and the German *hoffen* have been analyzed, since the predicate *hope* is a NR predicate in some languages, such as German, but not in others, such as English, see (3) vs. (4).

- (3) a. Ich hoffe nicht, dass es soweit kommt.  
I hope not that it so.far comes  
b. = 'I hope this won't happen.' (IDS corpora)
- (4) a. I definitely should try 210-065 exam questions! I don't hope that they are 100% valid, just wanna know what to expect on exam (enTenTen20)  
b. ≠ I hope they are not 100% valid ...

This study aims at understanding whether there are any semantic and pragmatic differences between the neg-raising use of *hope* and *hoffen* that can be derived from independent semantic-pragmatic properties of the relevant predicates.

Taking a quantitative and qualitative approach, the method employed is based on three different types of data. We first collected the occurrences of *hope* and *hoffen* from six English and German literary classics and the corresponding translations. Even if there is no NR in the text, we expect to find mismatches in the translation, i.e. cases where the two verbs are not considered translation equivalents.

We then investigated the main collocations of the two verbs in our database. If the two verbs have slightly distinct meaning, this could be reflected in their collocates.

Lastly, we examined the lexical definitions in monolingual dictionaries (Oxford, Collins; Duden, DWDS). We expect to find differences in the described meaning components. These differences should point in a direction to support NR in German, but not in English.

The data investigated in this study suggest that it is not promising to look for NR-independent meaning differences between English *hope* and German *hoffen* that could serve as a basis to explain their difference in NR.

## References

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