

No way and no chance
as emphatic negative response items

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1. Introduction

- Semiotic nouns *way*, *doubt* and *chance* in larger verbo-nominal patterns + relative or complement clause: locus of synchronic variation and diachronic change (Davidse et al. 2014, Davidse et al. 2015, Gentens et al. 2016, Saad et al. 2012, Van linden & Brems 2017)
 - **Lexical uses:**
 - (1) *I was just thinking that **there's no way** to send a signal, no way at all. We can't even yell.* (WB)
 - (2) *I'm romantic. Big boobs **have** a chance. Flat chests, **no chance**.* (WB)
 - **Grammatical uses: modal**
 - (3) *She **had no way** of knowing when Nick would return home.* (dynamic modality: absence of participant-inherent ability)
 - (4) ***There's no way** it was a domestic murder.* (epistemic: logical impossibility)
 - (5) *Since he was quite unable to run he **had no chance** of outstripping his pursuer, so he resigned himself to imminent recapture.* (epistemic + dynamic)
 - **Caused/attributed modal uses**
 - (6) *the legend of German foot-ball **gave** his club "**no chance**" of progressing to the next round.*
- Enrichment of (greater) modal system (Van linden & Brems 2017): basic modal meanings and caused modal uses

1. Introduction

- Focus on adverbials *no way* and *no chance* (without relative or complement clause) as emphatic negative response items (cf. Davidse et al. 2014)
- Paradigm of emphatic negative response items in Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 849):

<i>Not for all the tea in China!</i>	<i>Not likely!</i>	<i>Not on a bet! (AmE)</i>
<i>Not in a million years!</i>	<i>Not on your life!</i>	<i>Not on your nelly! (AmE)</i>
<i>No fear!</i>	<i>No chance!</i>	<i>No way!</i>

- How do *no way* and *no chance* compare to other negative markers and response items, e.g. *no*? (How) do they enrich this paradigm (e.g. epistemic inference in (9))?
 - (7) “*I beg the public to forgive me.*” “*No way, pervert. Resign!*” (sunnow)
 - (8) *I've definitely got to win this fight, there's a lot hanging on it, I can't afford to lose, no way.* (brregnews)
 - (9) “*Don't get lost, will you?*” “*No chance.*” (brbooks)

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Historical background
3. Data and methods of synchronic study
4. Results of synchronic study
5. Conclusion

2. Historical background

OEDonline on *chance* (< Old French; attested from ME onwards)

- “The falling out or happening of events; the way in which things fall out; **fortune**; case.”
- “An **opportunity** that comes in any one's way. Often const. *of*. ”
- “A **possibility** or **probability** of anything happening: as distinct from a certainty: often in plural, with a number expressed.”
- In “phrases”: “To stand a (fair, good) chance”; “Is there any chance of...?”; “To be in with a chance”

Diachronic development (Van linden & Brems 2018):

From happenstance (EModE) [*it BE (POSS DET) chance + to-inf*]

> epistemic-dynamic meanings

(EModE) [*HAVE (DET) chance + of V-ing*]

(LModE) [*HAVE (DET) chance + to-inf*] → negative polarity

2. Historical background

OEDonline on **way** (inherited from Germanic; attested from OE onwards)

- “A **track**, a road, a path.”
- “A course of action or behaviour; a means, a **manner**, a method.”(OE?)
- “*humorous* (chiefly U.S.). Used as a response to ‘no way’ ([NO WAY int. 1](#)), to emphasize the truth of an initial statement.”

OEDonline on **no way** (adverb and interjection)

- “**In no way or manner; not at all**; by no means. Also sometimes in negative contexts: anyway, in any case.”(a1400)
- “‘Under no circumstances’, ‘absolutely not’. Also used (esp. *humorously*) as an **emphatic** expression of **surprise** or **disbelief**. *slang* in later use” (1711)
- “*slang*. *No way, José*: absolutely not, definitely not.” (1979)

2. Historical background

- Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 849): *no way* evolved through bleaching of original manner meaning into “idiomatic phrase” expressing “emphatic negative response to question or other speech act”
- Davidse et al. (2014): Diachronic corpus study
 - (i) Development of clause-internal polarity item in **Middle English**, typically with **modal verbs**

(10) *hit beo se open sunne. þt he hit ne maze nanes weis allunge wið seggen.*
‘It is such a clear sin that he can no way deny it, in any way.’ (PPCME 1150-1250)
 - (ii) Development of *no way* as negative response item in **Present-day English** only

(11) *I admit I think Lyn is a bit odd, but killing babies? No way! Never!* (WB)

2. Historical background

- Davidse et al. (2014): Diachronic corpus study
 - (i) Development of clause-internal polarity item in **Middle English**, typically with **modal verbs**
 - (ii) Development of *no way* as negative response item in **Present-day English** only
 - (iii) Development of modal-polar clausal modifiers in **Present-day English** only: *there BE no way*
 - inability/impossibility > nonvolition/nondesirability > nonlikelihood (Narrog 2012)
 - analogical pull from common constructions like *(there's) no doubt/question* (Davidse et al. 2015)?
 - (iv) Development of mirative qualifier in **Present-day English** only: *No way!*
 - mirative use originates primarily in response use of emphatic negator, strongly 'interactionally' motivated, but also has modal meaning ('impossible')

3. Data and methods of synchronic study

- Queries run on **WordBanks Online** subcorpora (57 million word synchronic corpus)
- British English subcorpora:
 - **Spoken:** Brspok
 - **Written:** Brbooks, Brmags, Brnews, Brephem, Times, Sunnow
- Queries: “no way” and “no chance” immediately following a punctuation mark
- random set of 100 relevant examples for each string
- Excluded examples:
 - (12) *No way can I eat meat first thing in the morning* (clausally integrated negative marker uses)
 - (13) *She had no way forward, no way back* (clausally integrated lexical uses: ‘manner’ or ‘pathway’ sense)
 - (14) *There was, however, no chance that he would send French troops to Iraq.* (clausally integrated grammatical uses with complement)
 - (15) *The war’s begun, and more than likely things are all going the Enemy’s way already. No chance to go back with It and get advice or permission.* (elliptical grammatical uses with complement)

4. Results

4.1 Overview of uses

- When constituting independent utterances (not clausally integrated, without complements & prosodically marked off from remainder of clause): distinct uses

USE	<i>No way</i>	<i>No chance</i>
Emphatic negative response item	✓	✗
Emphatic negative response item + modal inference	✓	✓
Modal particle	✓	✓
Emphatic negative parenthetical	✓	✓
Lexical use	✓	✓
Mirative qualifier	✓	✗

4. Results

- Modal particle use (with implied complement):

(16) *A LADY who was bitten by a dog was saying how nasty bites are. I joked: “How about a love bite?” She said: “No chance - my old man takes his teeth out at night!”* (WB)

→ “No” would not form a felicitous reply to wh-interrogative (so no negative response item)

→ epistemic modality: impossibility (‘that won’t happen’)

(17) *I was foolish to even try. We set out along the highway that leads south of the city, and were approaching the off-ramp for Soweto when I saw the police checkpoints. They were everywhere. Police and soldiers, armoured vehicles, unmarked cars, helicopters prowling overhead. The driver looked at me as if to say ‘no way’. I nodded my head and we carried on past the off-ramp and found our way back to the city centre.*

→ “No” would not form a felicitous reply (so no negative response item)

→ epistemic/dynamic modality: impossibility (‘No way can we reach the intended goal’)

4. Results

- Emphatic negative parenthetical:

(18) *Didn't see the thief too clearly - dark in there when the lights went out - but he was short, quick, and hairy. Really short - like four feet. Not a performing animal, **no chance**. Moved like a person.* (WB)

→ no negative response item, but emphatic negative marker following negative statement ([he was] not a performing animal)

→ possibly also modal inference: 'impossible; that was not the case'

(19) *I'm not a gambler, **no way**.* (WB)

→ no negative response item, but emphatic negative marker following negative statement

4. Results

- Lexical use:

(20) *Harried Schmeichel predicted last week that United would rack up scores of eight and nine this season on their inevitable way to another championship crown. **No chance** yesterday.* (WB)

→ preceding clause: prediction

→ *No chance yesterday*: United had no scoring chances (lexical use)

(possibly also modal inference: ‘impossible; this is not what happened’)

(21) *Bin Laden has three wives and 13 children. Doomed. **No way** up no way down.. minutes to live.* (WB)

→ *no way*: literally no path leading out + dynamic inference: ‘he cannot escape’

4. Results

- Mirative qualifier: restricted to *no way*
 - Originating in but at present different from negative response item
 - Speaker's surprise at preceding utterance
 - also epistemic inference ('impossible')

(22) *As Smokes told the story, Cherry began to look absolutely stunned. 'No way,' she kept saying. 'Get out of here, Smokes.'*

(23) *'Who?' we all asked. 'I can't say, obviously.' 'No, no, of course you can't,' we agreed. 'But let's just say that she's a very famous Australian pop singer.' We all looked at each other. 'No way!' (WB)*

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

Speech act type of preceding utterance	<i>No way</i>	<i>No chance</i>
Demanding – knowledge (question)	✓	✓
Demanding – action (command)	✓	✓
Giving – knowledge (statement)	✓	✓
Giving – action (offer)	✓	✓

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

a) Questions → Polar interrogatives targeting:

- Knowledge about past/present

(24) *I said to Len not once, not twice, but more times than I care to count - that girl of yours shouldn't be at the race track. I mean, what respectable woman would do a job like that? But could I make him see sense? **No chance!** Like all men, my brother only sees what he wants to see. (WB) (+ dynamic inference)*

(25) *'Flynn, are you crying?' 'No way'. (WB)*

- Intention of interlocutor:

(26) *A newspaper man who pried too much has been viciously beaten in Zimbabwe in the past and it is possible that Robert Mugabe's cronies will make our visit uncomfortable. But pull out? **No chance.** (WB) self-addressed question*

(27) *"I saw three people killed," said Lek Mun, now 39. "Would you stay in an area like that?" "No way". (WB)*

- Intention of third person:

(28) *"Do you think he'd let me have one of his new cars to test drive. Permanently?" "No chance, Linda. Keep the bicycle!" (WB)*

(29) *I think Lyn is a bit odd, but killing babies? **No way.** (WB) self-addressed question*

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

b) Commands → subtypes

- Proposal for joint action

(30) *ENGLAND boss Sven Goran Eriksson met Republic of Ireland manager Mick McCarthy after the World Cup draw and joked: "Fancy a swap?" Stunned McCarthy thought for a moment, then quickly replied: "No chance!"* (WB)

(31) *He said, "Oh come on, let's do that again". "No way."* (WB)

- Prohibition:

(32) *"Don't get lost, will you?" "No chance."* (WB) → compliance with prohibition; acceptance of request

(33) *"You're not going to do any damn-fool thing like that!" "No way"* (WB)

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

b) Commands → subtypes

- Request for permission:

(34) *If you have been on a tenner a week pocket money and suddenly you find yourself with the equivalent of 1,000 weeks in your mitt, you'd go ape poo mental. You'd buy everything your tenner allowance couldn't stretch to – PC World and HMV wouldn't know what hit them. But why now though? What about the millions of ex 18-year-olds? Can we demand it's backdated? **No chance.*** (WB)
(self-addressed)

- Request for action:

(35) *"Can I have a kiss now?" she asks. "**No chance!**" he replies.* (WB) (+ dynamic/deontic inference)

(36) *"I beg the public to forgive me." "**No way, pervert. Resign!**"* (WB)

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

c) Statements → discourse patterns

- Same speaker (self-addressed): past expectation not borne out in reality

(37) *You would have thought Hoddle might have learned something during his time out of the game, that he might have quietly reflected on his past errors of judgment and resolved to tread a little more warily in future. **No chance**. Within minutes, he had committed two classic blunders and reconfirmed the old belief that he only opens his mouth to change feet.* (WB)

→ epistemically modalized statement + “**BUT NO**, this is not what happened”

- Same speaker: (negative) intention in view of third person’s intentions

(38) *They were going to take me to Paris and keep me in prison for another three or four days. And I thought, ‘**No way**.’ I could have done what other riders have done, strung it out for months, but I thought, ‘Enough. I’ll give them what they need.’ [i.e. a confession] (WB)*

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

c) Statements → discourse patterns

- Different speaker: challenging interlocutor's statement

(39) *"I think it's a grave. A Roman grave," she said solemnly. There was a moment's silence. Slowly Greg shook his head. "No chance. If it's anything at all, it's one of those red hill things – to do with ancient salt workings."* (WB) (+ epistemic inference)

(40) *'I bet you're looking at it through rose coloured glasses.'* 'No way' (WB)

4. Results

4.2 Emphatic negative response uses (possibly with modal inference)

d) Offers → discourse patterns

- Reported speech construction:

(41) *Leeds made a move for the 6ft 4in Norwegian hitman even before the Pounds 12m sale of Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink to Atletico Madrid. But Elland Road chairman Peter Ridsdale was told “no chance” when he rang Chelsea chief Colin Hutchinson to try and clinch a deal.* (WB)

→ Refusal of transfer bid for soccer player (+ epistemic inference)

(42) *We've heard almost nothing about all that. Triumph, the bra company, did approach us, but we said “no way.” Again, it's the sport we want to promote, not our bodies.* (WB)

→ Refusal of sponsorship deal

- Different speaker: Refusal of offer

(43) *Joe had got hold of Rachel now, and was doing some kind of mad rock and roll. “Come on, Art,” I said, “I'm going to teach you to jive.” “No chance,” he said, pushing me up against the wall and trying to get into a clinch.* (WB)

(44) *“Fancy coming here?” “No way. I want to be the Man United goalie.”* (WB)

5. Conclusions

- Importance of negation for **grammaticalization** of *no chance/way* to convey polar, modal and/or mirative meanings
- Cognitive and linguistic interaction between concepts:
 - negation emphasizes that a fact is contrary to expectation (Wason 1965: 7)
 - mirativity marks (un)expectedness of p
 - modality assesses dynamic and epistemic '(im)possibility' of SoA or p
- emphatic effect: → expressive, speaker-related and discourse-oriented meanings
- *No way* can be 'purely' negative, but typically occurs in contexts with a modal auxiliary, with which the emphatic negative meaning interacts
- *No chance* is less bleached (no 'purely' polar uses) and itself adds or implies modal undertones
 - difference between them is not surprising in view of their diachrony (persistence)

5. Conclusions

No way and *no chance* seem to ‘respond’ to a greater variety of speech acts than *no*

- Shared functions:
 - Negative response to polar interrogatives
 - Challenging the interlocutor’s statement
 - Compliance with prohibition
 - Rejection of invitation to joint action
 - Refusal of request
 - Refusal of offer
 - Specialized uses:
 - *No way*: purely negative response item, mirative qualifier
 - *No chance*: challenging speaker’s past expectations (‘But no’), purely modal uses
- +
Lexical uses
Emphatic parenthetical use

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