

NEGATIVE OBSCENITY INVERSION – A VIEW OF THE ENGLISH FUCK INVERSION AND THE DANISH *GU'+RØV* PHENOMENON

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SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

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MINDS - MIND THE STRUCTURE
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THE PHENOMENON OF *FUCK*-INVERSION

Do you think we'l [sic] get a replacement for Austin? Will we **fuck**, we'l [sic] have to make do as always.

(GloWbe, written)



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THE NEG. CRITERION

- a. Each Neg X° must be in a Spec-Head relation with a Negative operator;
- b. Each Negative operator must be in a Spec-Head relation with a Neg X°

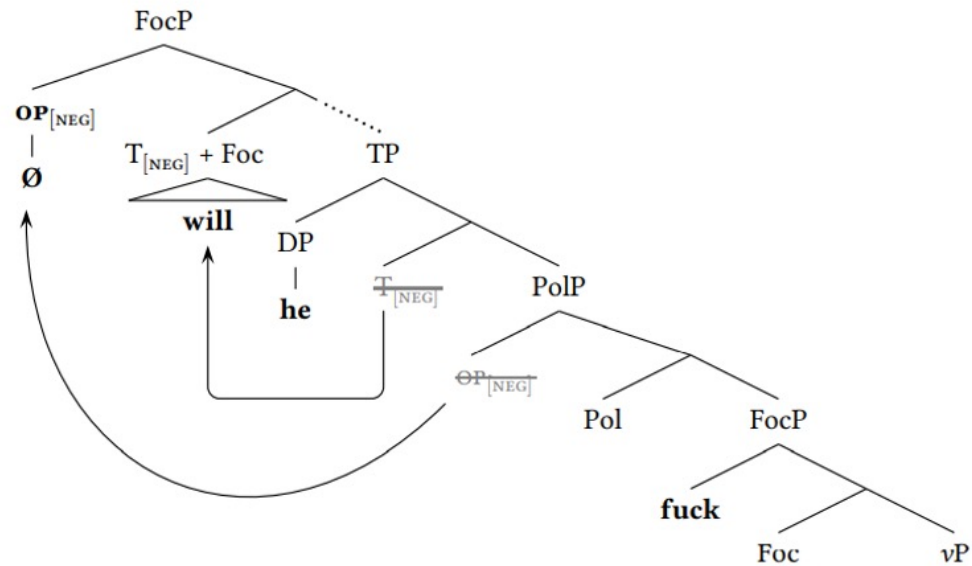
(Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991, 244)

Similar to CNI

Based on the work on the Affect Criterion (Haegeman 1995)



THE SYNTAX OF *FUCK*-INVERSION



(Sailor 2017, 105)

THE SYNTAX OF *FUCK*-INVERSION

- Negation moves into Foc'/CP' and becomes a Negative Operator
- The Negative Operator licenses movement of the finite verb into C° (Because The I° bearing negative feature must be in head position of the phrase that has the Negative Operator as its specifier)
- *Fuck* is then a polarity sensitive focus particle (like too (Kayne 1998) (Wood 2008))



THE *GU*+*RØV* PHENOMENON

Det her viser hvorfor jeg hader dem! Se lige hvor selvglad han er. **Gu** er han **røv** den bedste i DK!

*This here shows why I hate them! Look just how self-satisfied he is. **God** is he **ass** the best in DK*

(@Driblekongen, 29. july, 2007, 20:38, comment on Morethanaclub.dk; emphasis added)



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DISTRIBUTION OF THE GRP

Search item	Search results	Percentage of Results
Gu' er han røv/ej <i>God is he ass/not</i>	10 / 589	1.67% / 98.33
Gu' vil jeg røv/ej <i>God will I ass/not</i>	253 / 41900	0.60% / 99.40%
Gu' kan vi røv/ej <i>God can we ass/not</i>	2 / 137	1.44% / 98.56%
Gu' er jeg røv/ej <i>God am I ass/not</i>	71 / 1640	4.15% / 95.85%
Gu' er hun røv/ej <i>God is she ass/not</i>	5 / 272	1.81% / 98.19%
Gu' er de røv/ej <i>God are they ass/not</i>	77 / 1930	3.84% / 96.16%
Gu kan jeg røv/ej <i>God can I ass/not</i>	2 / 229	0.87% / 99.13%
Gu' er du røv/ej <i>God are you ass/not</i>	56 / 722	7.20% / 92.80%

The variants with *røv* cover on average only 2.70% of the total number of such constructions

(Rohde 2021, 12)



WHAT IS *GU'*? –A MARKER OF EMPHASIS!

- *Gu'* is not a marker of negative polarity:

Gu'-CNI: a. **Gu'** vil jeg gå, før de betaler mig mine penge.

God will I leave, until they pay me my money.

(= I will leave before they pay me my money)

b. Da CNI: **Under ingen omstændigheder** vil jeg gå, før de betaler mig mine penge.

Under no circumstances will I leave until they pay me my money.

- *Gu'* can occur in sentences of positive polarity

Gu' var jeg en skoledreng

God was I a schoolboy

... IS *RØV* THEN A NEGATION?

- Sits in the place of sentential negation in Danish

- Structurally identical to *gu+ej*

*Gu' er han **ej** min bedste ven! = Gu' er han **røv** min bedste ven!*

No difference in meaning (except maybe in social register)

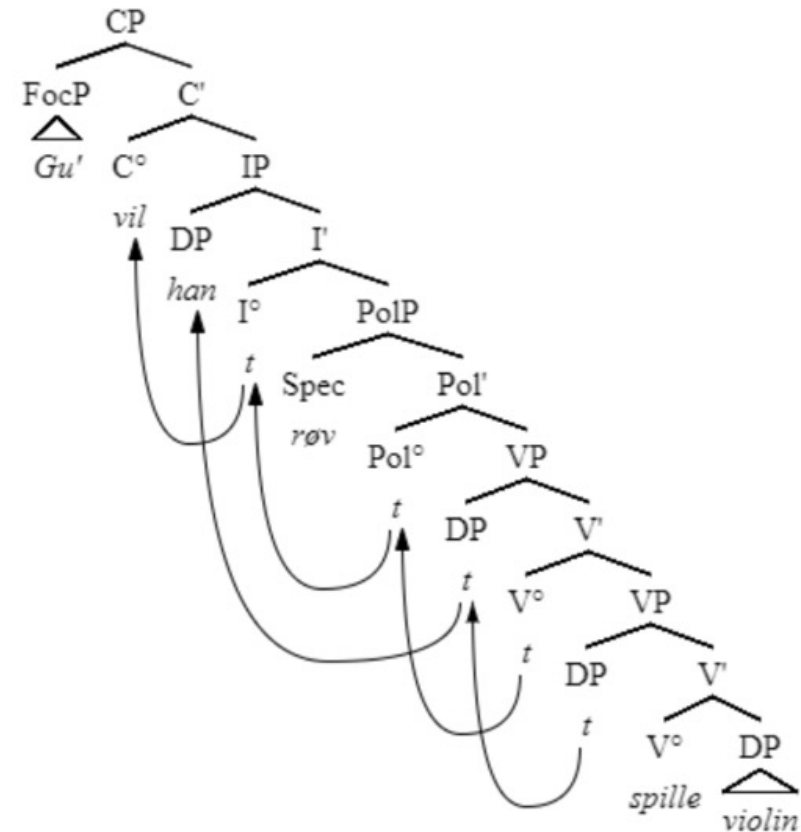


THE SYNTAX OF THE *GU+RØV* PHENOMENON

- Much movement already accounted for simply through danish word order (I° still receives +negative feature in Pol°)
- *Røv* as the Specifier of a Polarity Phrase, C-commanding the VP.
- *Gu'* is a marker of emphasis, in this case, the head of a Focus Phrase (in this case, however, not a polarity sensitive one)

Gu' vil han røv spille violin.

God will he ass play violin



(Rohde 2021, 22)



IN SUMMARY:

- Negative Polarity of FI arises from a non-overt left edge Negative Operator, whereas GRP is negated by *røv* that is born in the Pol'.
- The obscenity in FI serves as a polarity sensitive Focus Particle, whereas the obscenity in the GRP serves as a negation.
- *Gu'* and similarly *ve/* are found to be markers of emphasis.
- This analysis of the GRP might have implications for similarly structured phenomena in Danish as well as other novel colloquial phenomena (with obscenities).



FINISHING REMARKS

And on a finishing note, I would just like to remark that however vulgar one might find the GRP, we should all at least be somewhat relieved that the fashionable way of disputing utterances, made or inferred, is not:

'Er du sur?' 'Gu er jeg da ikke-nikke-nej'.

(KorpusDK)

'Are you angry?' 'God am I surely not-nod-no'



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