Polarity-driven Inversion in British English and Beyond[*]

Craig Sailor
University of Groningen
cwsailor@gmail.com

20 February 2015
UCL Dept. of Linguistics

1   Introduction

In colloquial varieties of English throughout the British Isles, the utterance type below expresses emphatic negation, yet lacks overt negative morphology.

- Instead, you get inversion of the tensed auxiliary or modal across the subject, and a conspicuous taboo word – *fuck*, for example – in post-subject position:

(1)   A: John is a nice guy.
         B: Is he fuck (a nice guy) – he stabbed my cousin!
                = *No he isn't (a nice guy)!*

(2)   They're all wearing kilts, but will I fuck be wearing one of them.
         = *I definitely won't be wearing one of those.*

I will call this *fuck*-inversion (FI) for short (recognizing that it isn't actually *fuck* that inverts).

- FI is reminiscent of canonical negative inversion (CNI)[1] in Standard English (Lasnik 1972, Rudanko 1982, Haegeman 1995, a.o.), but with a different surface profile:

(3)   They're all wearing kilts, but under no circumstances will I be wearing one of those.

Vulgar and taboo phenomena exhibit complex syntactic and semantic behavior with implications for formal theories (Dong 1992, McCloskey 1993, Corver 2014, a.o.)

- This is especially true in the realm of negation (Postma 2001, Postal 2004, a.o.).

- I argue below that FI is another such phenomenon.

> **Goals for today's talk:**
> - Lay out the basic descriptive properties of FI, a previously-undescribed phenomenon;
> - Situate FI within the broader typology of negative expressions (esp. those with inversion);
> - Suggest that FI fulfills a prediction made by existing theories for such phenomena (Haegeman 1995, Wood 2014).

2   Properties

2.1   Dialectal distribution and variation

A preliminary survey of various Englishes suggests that FI is ubiquitous in the British Isles:

- It is widely attested across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.[2]

- FI belongs to a colloquial register, and thus is not necessarily in the productive grammar of all such speakers.

---

[*]Special thanks to Gary Thoms for extensive data and discussion. Thanks also to Patrick Elliott, James Griffiths, Liliane Haegeman, Will Harwood, Larry Horn, Jim Wood, and the audience of LAGB 2014 at the University of Oxford for data and/or helpful feedback.

[1]Instances of what I call <u>non</u>-canonical inversion (negative and otherwise) receive mention in §3.

[2]I have to this point been unable to check the status of FI in e.g. the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

But outside the British Isles, FI appears to be completely <u>unattested</u>:

- Unattested in e.g. varieties from the US, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, or Singapore, informal or otherwise.

In the varieties that <u>do</u> have FI, there is some variation in what I will refer to as the *taboo element*

- E.g. speakers from the Midlands and the North of England often use *ever, heck* (*'eck*), etc., in place of *fuck* to achieve the same meaning.

- A non-exhaustive set of FI taboo elements is below:[3]

(4)   A: Apparently John has a new girlfriend.

B: Does he $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{fuck} \\ \text{'eck} \\ \text{ever} \\ \text{bugger} \\ \text{bollocks} \\ \text{balls} \\ \ldots \end{array} \right\}$!

In general, the taboo element in an FI clause must appear immediately after the subject;[4] no adverbs, auxiliaries, or other material can intervene:

(5)   a.   *Has he clearly {fuck/'eck/etc.} (done that).
       b.   *Should they have {fuck/'eck/etc.} (been doing that).

A proper subset of the varieties with FI also allow a variant involving a continuation with *as like*, typically with *'eck* as the taboo element:

(6)   A: John's a nice guy.
       B: Is he 'eck as like – he stabbed my cousin!

The regional distribution of this *as like* continuation is unclear at this point (investigation is ongoing):

- While it appears to be freely attested in e.g. Grimsby (Lincolnshire), it is considered archaic or no longer in current use locally in various nearby counties in the Midlands (e.g. parts of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire).

2.2   Negative and hyponegative properties

FI is an instance of what Horn (2009) calls *hyponegation*, in which a negative interpretation arises from an utterance lacking overt standard negative morphology.

- Most famous example in English: *I could care less* (=*I couldn't care less*)

Despite lacking overt negative morphology, hyponegative clauses (inc. FI) behave in many ways like *standard negative* (SN) clauses, i.e. clauses with overt sentential negation (*not/-n't*).

- Clauses involving *canonical negative inversion* (CNI) also behave in many ways like SN clauses.

- All three clause types pattern together with respect to standard tests for negation in the literature (Klima 1964,

---

[3]Note that the use of *ever* in FI produces strings that are surface-identical to a type of exclamative in English (perhaps chiefly in American varieties), but they crucially differ in that the latter has emphatic <u>affirmative</u> polarity. For example, the affirmative exclamative with *ever* is licensed in contexts where the speaker emphatically agrees with or confirms a preceding assertion:

(i)   A: These cheese grits are outstanding.
       B: (Boy,) Are they <u>ever</u>!
             = *Yes, they really are!*

[4]In certain contexts, some of my consultants allow the taboo element in FI to surface <u>after</u> the predicate: see Appendix 2.

Horn 1989:246, Haegeman 2012:43, a.o.).

First, like SN, both CNI and FI are downward entailing:[5]

(7)　　John claims to be a nationalist, but...

　　a.　He will not vote for independence.　⇒　He will not vote for <u>radical</u> independence.　　*SN*
　　b.　Never will he vote for independence.　⇒　Never will he vote for <u>radical</u> independence.　　*CNI*
　　c.　Will he fuck vote for independence.　⇒　Will he fuck vote for <u>radical</u> independence.　　*FI*

FI also licenses so-called strong NPIs, e.g. punctual-*until* (Horn 1989, Gajewski 2011):

(8)　　My flight is tomorrow, but...

　　a.　I will not be leaving until they pay me my money.　　*SN*
　　b.　No way will I be leaving until they pay me my money.　　*CNI*
　　c.　Will I fuck be leaving until they pay me my money.　　*FI*

Like SN and CNI clauses, FI can take *neither* tags, but it is incompatible with *so* tags (Klima 1964):

(9)　　Q:　Are you voting 'no' in the referendum?

　　a.　A:　I am not, and {neither / #so} are my friends.　　*SN*
　　b.　A:　Under no circumstances am I doing that, and {neither / #so} are my friends.　　*CNI*
　　c.　A:　Am I fuck, and {neither / #so} are my friends.　　*FI*

Klima (1964): only negative clauses are compatible with *not even* continuations. Again, CNI and FI both pattern like SN in this respect:

(10)　　Q:　Did John bring any gear?

　　a.　A:　He didn't bring any, not even any jellies.　　*SN*
　　b.　A:　No chance did he bring any, not even any jellies.　　*CNI*
　　c.　A:　Did he fuck bring any, not even any jellies.　　*FI*

A final *I don't think* parenthetical is another diagnostic for negation in the host clause (Postal 2004:§2.6). CNI clauses and, for at least some speakers, FI clauses can take these:[6]

(11)　　It's John's birthday tomorrow, but...

　　a.　He's not gonna let anyone give him presents I don't think.　　*SN*
　　b.　At no point is he gonna let anyone give him presents I don't think.　　*CNI*
　　c. %Is he fuck gonna let anyone give him presents I don't think.　　*FI*

Finally, FI can associate with focus, as SN and CNI can. This is not unique to negation, but it is still a property associated with it:

(12)　　He may have some luck getting Mary to vote for the Tories, but...

　　a.　He won't be convincing ME.　　*SN*
　　b.　No chance will he be convincing ME.　　*CNI*
　　c.　Will he fuck be convincing ME.　　*FI*

So FI bears a negative interpretation and patterns like SN clauses with respect to the relevant tests, just as CNI does.

Important: while these three clause types share the above behavioral characteristics, they are not interchangeable

- In particular, FI and CNI have a narrower distribution than SN clauses, by way of (at least) their emphatic character (see Culicover 1991 and Haegeman 2012:§1.5.4 on this property of CNI)

- E.g. while an SN clause can be used as a partial answer to a wh-question (Simons 2007:1042), both CNI and FI

---

[5]This (among other things) distinguishes *fuck*-inversion from another class of hyponegative contexts, the *Flaubert triggers* of Horn (2001), which are not downward entailing.

[6]Consultants report varying degrees of acceptability for (11c), which could be due to two different factors. First, these final parenthetical clauses convey some degree of epistemic uncertainty, making their use following an FI clause (and to a lesser extent a CNI clause), which carries strong epistemic certainty, slightly unnatural. Second, as Larry Horn (p.c.) points out, this test otherwise seems to require <u>overt</u> negation, perhaps to an even greater degree than the other tests considered, making it particularly surprising that anyone should accept (11c). Perhaps speakers vary in their sensitivity to these constraints.

are unacceptable there:

(13)   Q: Who ate all the Jaffa Cakes?

      a.   A: John didn't.   *SN*

      b.   A: #In no way did John.   *CNI*

      c.   A: #Did John fuck!   *FI*

This follows if the main contribution of CNI and FI is emphatic polarity:

- The portion of the utterance that would otherwise answer the question (e.g. *John*) lacks the necessary "main point status" (in the sense of Simons 2007) that felicitous answers to wh-questions require.

- We will see further important differences between SN on the one hand and CNI and FI on the other.

2.3   Denials and reversals

FI freely arises in contexts where it takes another speaker's assertion as an antecedent and emphatically denies the truth of that assertion (repeated from (1)):

(14)   A: John is a nice guy.

          B: Is he fuck (a nice guy)!

               = *No he isn't (a nice guy)!*

This makes FI look like a *total denial / reversing move* of Farkas and Bruce (2010:§4.1) (cf. *retorts* in Sailor 2014: ch. 3).

- In this capacity it appears to behave along the lines of *like hell*, a similarly colloquial denial strategy (but with wider dialectal distribution[7]):

(15)   A: John is a nice guy.

          B: Like hell he is!

               = *No he isn't (a nice guy)!*

- However, FI exhibits several properties that distinguish it from *like hell* and certain other reversing strategies.

First, this negative use of *fuck* <u>always</u> triggers inversion, while, for many speakers, *like hell* does not (Drozd 2001:57):[8]

(16)   A: John is a nice guy.

      a.   B: Is he fuck (a nice guy)!

      b.   B: *He is fuck (a nice guy)!

      c.   B: %Like hell is he (a nice guy)!

      d.   B: Like hell he is (a nice guy)!

Second, FI clauses can arise as emphatic negative answers to neutral polar questions, while *like hell* is typically infelicitous there (cf. fn. 8):

(17)   Q: Is it sunny outside?

      a.   A: Is it fuck (sunny outside)!

      b.   A: %Like hell it is (sunny outside)!

Finally, Horn (1989), Drozd (2001), Martins (2014) observe that *like hell* is metalinguistic: it objects to some (sub)part of another speaker's utterance.

- FI <u>can</u> behave this way, as we saw in (1), but it <u>need not</u>.

- FI naturally occurs without a linguistic antecedent, and can be used to cancel an implicature, even one introduced by the speaker's own utterance (see also (7) and (8)):

---

[7] I have not found a variety of English lacking *like hell*, though other strategies (e.g. FI) may be preferred.

[8] A minority of my consultants allows inversion with *like hell*. Interestingly, those same speakers allow *like hell* as a felicitous response to neutral polar questions (see (17) below), perhaps indicating that these speakers have reanalyzed *like hell*, shedding its metalinguistic-negative character (see further below) for sentence-level negative status on par with other negative constituents triggering CNI. I leave this aside.

(18)   It's St. Patrick's day,   *[Implicature: people wear green on St. Patrick's day]*
        a.   ...but will I fuck be wearing anything green.
        b.   *...but like hell I will be wearing anything green.[9]

- Moreover, Drozd (2001) notes that as a type of metalinguistic negation, *like hell* is insensitive to the polarity of its antecedent, meaning it can take a negative clause:

(19)   A: You didn't wash the dishes.
        B: Like hell I didn't!

- On the other hand, overt negation is impossible with FI, even when negation is present in its antecedent:[10]

(20)   A: John didn't have a drop to drink last night.
        B: *Didn't he fuck!

- FI requires <u>affirmative</u> content to pick up on (see Wood 2014 for a similar restriction with a different emphatic polarity phenomenon).

Continuing the theme from earlier, CNI behaves like FI (and not like *like hell*) with respect to the environments above:

(21)   a.   A: In no way is it sunny.   *(cf. (17))*
        b.   ...but under no circumstances will I be wearing anything green.   *(cf. (18))*
        c.   *Never didn't he have a drink in his hand.[11]   *(cf. (20))*

Thus, FI is distinct from *like hell* and similar metalinguistic-negative phenomena (see e.g. Martins 2014), but continues to exhibit similarities to canonical negative inversion.

- An analysis relating FI to negative inversion is therefore warranted; but, before developing such an analysis, prior approaches to both CNI and other polarity-based inversion phenomena bear consideration.

3   Canonical and non-canonical polarity-driven inversion

Haegeman (1995, following Klima 1964, a.o.): Negative clauses and interrogative clauses are inherently related: both involve inversion in the context of a fronted A'-operator.

- Operator movement takes place for semantic (scopal) reasons. CNI involves focus fronting of a negative operator (*never, at no time*, etc.) to the left edge of the clause, consistent with its emphatic interpretation;

- This triggers head movement of $T_{[NEG]}$, obeying the NEG-criterion (Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991):

(22)   **The NEG-criterion**
        a.   A NEG-operator must be in a Spec-Head configuration with an $X_{[NEG]}$ (a head bearing a negative feature)[12]
        b.   An $X_{[NEG]}$ must be in a Spec-Head configuration with a NEG-operator.

- This is akin to the relationship that exists between WH-operators and particular heads in the clause, rendered as the WH-criterion in Rizzi (1996) (see also the FOCUS-criterion: Brody 1990, Aboh 1993, a.o.).

- A simplified sketch of CNI is below (based on Haegeman 2000:§5.4, 2012:§1.5.4):

(23)   Never will he vote for independence.

---

[9] Example (18b) might be bad for more than one reason. In particular, most speakers find *like hell* degraded when the clause it appears in does not contain VP ellipsis. VPE famously prefers a linguistic antecedent, making it difficult to test *like hell* in the above way.

[10] I distinguish standard negation here from constituent negation, the latter being fully compatible with FI: *A: John says he's able to not drink at parties. B: Can he fuck not drink!*

[11] This seems to improve marginally with heavy focus on *didn't*, but remains degraded. I leave this aside.

[12] See e.g. Laka (1990) and Haegeman (1995, 2000), a.o. on the distribution of [NEG], which is inherently related to tense (and thus T^0).
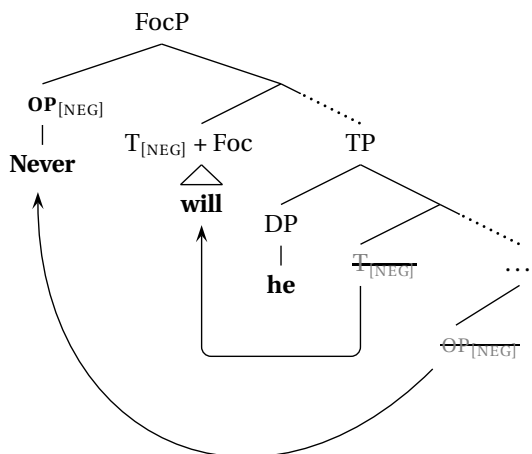
Wood (2008, 2014) takes a similar approach to the syntax of *so/neither*-inversion:

(24)   a.   John is planning to buy an SP-1200, and so (too) is Mary.
       b.   Mary can't stand trap music, and neither can John.

Like CNI, these also involve a fronted polarity operator in the left edge of the clause,[13] originating in the specifier of the clause-internal polarity projection (PolP, just below TP: Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1991).

Building on Kayne (1998), Wood argues that *so/neither* inversion clauses involve a polarity-sensitive focus particle.

- These focus particles are generated local to polarity, in the specifier of a low Foc(us) projection selected by Pol^0 at the left edge of the verbal domain (see Jayaseelan 2001 and Belletti 2004).

- In the affirmative case – i.e. *so*-inversion – the polarity operator is *so*, and its accompanying focus particle is *too* (which can be non-overt: see Wood 2014:102).

- In the negative case, Wood takes a decompositional approach to *neither*, arguing that *either* is the negative focus particle analogue of *too*, leaving *n-* as the polarity operator, analogous to *so*.

  ‣ A sketch of the underlying structure for *so/neither*-inversion from Wood (2014) is below (obscuring some irrelevant details):

(25)
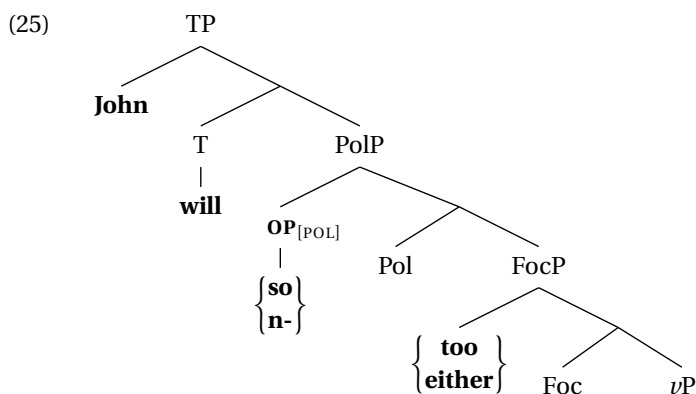
For Wood (2008, 2014), the polarity operator and the focus particle together drive the syntax and emphatic interpretation of *so/neither*-inversion clauses.

- In the next section, I extend the above proposals for both CNI and *so/neither*-inversion to FI.

---

[13]In Wood's account, the relevant Spec-Head configuration is established in a left-edge polarity projection rather than a focus projection.

4   Inversion for *fuck*'s sake

> **Claim:** the derivation of FI involves a silent counterpart of the overt negative operator seen in CNI.

- The analysis of FI to come has components of both CNI (a fronted negative operator inducing inversion) and *so/neither*-inversion (a low-peripheral focus particle, i.e. *fuck*).

4.1   Properties of left-edge polarity operators

In both CNI and FI clauses, negation scopes very high – higher than in normal SN clauses.

In SN contexts, there is a well-known ambiguity between negation and *because*-clauses:

(26)   John didn't cry because he feared violence.   *SN*

    a.   NEG > B/C: If John cried, it's not because he feared violence.
    b.   B/C > NEG: John didn't cry, and that's because he feared violence.

- Assume this scope ambiguity reflects an attachment ambiguity: the *because*-clause is either construed higher than sentential negation, or lower.

Importantly, this scope ambiguity disappears in the context of CNI—only the high reading for negation is possible:[14]

(27)   At no time did John cry because he feared violence.   *CNI*

    a.   NEG > B/C
    b.   #B/C > NEG

- This disambiguating effect follows from the left-edge status of the negative scope-taking operator *at no time*.
  - ‣ From its high surface position, this fronted negative operator unambiguously scopes over the attachment site for *because*-clauses (and see Horn 2014 for a review of other scopal properties of negation in CNI).

Importantly, negation in FI exhibits this same disambiguating effect, i.e. it takes highest scope:

(28)   John is a sensitive guy, but did he fuck cry because he feared violence.   *FI*

    a.   NEG > B/C
    b.   #B/C > NEG

- By parity of reasoning with the CNI data in (27), it is reasonable to conclude that FI also involves a left-edge negative operator—one which is not pronounced.

Further support: NPIs in subject position are licensed in both CNI and FI, but are impossible in SN clauses:

(29)   We might have gotten a bit lairy at the football match, but...
    a.   #...any of us didn't throw flares onto the field.   *SN*
    b.   ...at no time did any of us throw flares onto the field.   *CNI*
    c.   ...did any of us fuck throw flares onto the field.   *FI*

- This follows again from the especially high scope of negation in these inversion phenomena.

Finally, in both CNI and FI, disjoined subjects are interpreted conjunctively; i.e., the negative proposition expressed by the CNI and FI clauses holds for each disjunct.

- English disjunction only behaves this way under the scope of negation, and disjoined subjects in SN clauses do not receive a conjunctive reading (Horn 1989).

(30)   It's St. Patrick's day tomorrow, but...
    a.   ...John or Mary won't be wearing anything green.   *SN*
        = *John won't wear green <u>or</u> Mary won't wear green*

---

[14]Unsurprisingly, the (b) reading is available with a strong intonational break between the CNI clause and the *because*-clause, indicating highest (clause-level) attachment for the latter (see e.g. Haegeman 2012:§4.4 on the central vs. peripheral distinction in adverbial clauses).

> #*John won't wear green <u>and</u> Mary won't wear green*

    b. ...no way will John or Mary be wearing anything green.   *CNI*
>   = *John won't wear green <u>and</u> Mary won't wear green*

    c. ...will John or Mary fuck be wearing anything green.   *FI*
>   = *John won't wear green <u>and</u> Mary won't wear green*

- Like (29), this indicates that subject position in both CNI and FI falls within the scopal domain of the negative operator, a domain whose upper bound is higher than that of SN clauses.[15]

  ▸ Again, this is consistent with the claim that FI, like CNI, involves a left-edge negative operator.

The above observations reflect the high (pre-subject) position of the negative operator in CNI clauses.

- The fact that FI clauses behave exactly the same way indicates that they involve a high negative operator as well, only one which happens to be non-overt (see Haegeman 1995:185 on other non-overt negative operators).[16]

- The overt vs. non-overt status of the negative operator determines the verb-second vs. verb-initial surface profile of the inversion phenomenon (see Horn 2014 on this distinction)

  ▸ Both are of course verb-second in the syntax, owing to the NEG-criterion.

4.2   The typology of operator-driven inversion

The above conclusion directly parallels existing assumptions in the literature regarding question operators.

- Following Klima (1964), Haegeman (1995:§2.2.4) argues inversion in matrix polar questions in English is triggered by a silent WH-operator in the left periphery (the WH-criterion: Rizzi 1996, a.o.).

- The existence of such an operator grants non-exceptional status to verb-initial polar-Qs in languages that otherwise require verb-second surface order (e.g. Dutch).

  ▸ Thus, CNI is just the negative analogue of a non-subject wh- question (overt OP + inversion), while

  ▸ FI is the negative analogue of a polar question (non-overt OP + inversion).

- This is directly predicted by Haegeman (1995, 2000, 2012) and Rizzi's (1996) analysis of CNI, represented below (the grey cell reflects the previously-unattested prediction in the typology):

(31)

	Question clause	Emphatic negative clause
Overt OP	wh- question	canonical negative inversion
Non-overt OP	polar question	*fuck*-inversion

This OP-based approach to inversion in FI is consistent with the emphatic interpretation of negation FI receives.

- OP movement in both CNI and FI is focus movement, associated with emphatic interpretations.

  ▸ Indeed, <u>polar exclamatives</u> represent a non-negative, non-interrogative counterpart with the same emphatic interpretation, along with an overt focus operator (McCready 2009 a.o.):

(32)   Man is it hot today!
        = *It is surprisingly hot today.*

---

[15]This also holds for disjoined subjects in clauses involving a fronted *neither* alongside an inverted auxiliary, as expected: see Wood (2014:81).

[16]Note that whereas CNI is generally taken to be a main clause phenomenon, there are environments in which embedding is possible (Culicover 1991:13). On the other hand, FI can never be embedded (under bridge verbs or otherwise):

    (i)   I said that not once had Robin raised his hand.   *CNI*
    (ii)   *I said that had Robin fuck raised his hand.   *FI*

This asymmetry is unexpected given the similarities we have seen between the two so far: if the two phenomena make use of the same sort of polarity operator, then under an operator/intervention-based approach to main clause phenomena, we either expect both to be embeddable, or neither. This matter remains open for now. Thanks to Liliane Haegeman for helpful discussion.

The focus-fronted operator *man* yields the emphatic interpretation, and triggers inversion in satisfaction of the FOCUS-criterion (Brody 1990, Aboh 1993).

We now have an account for many of the properties of FI described earlier, and for its similarity to CNI in particular.

- However, an important question about FI remains: what's the *fuck*?[17]

4.3 Polarity-sensitive focus particles and the derivation of *fuck*-inversion

> **Claim:** the taboo element in FI is a polarity-sensitive focus particle in Spec of a low FocP, below the polarity OP.

- In other words, the taboo element is analogous to Kayne (1998) and Wood's (2008) analysis of *too* and, more to the point, (*n-*)*either*.
  - ‣ I.e., *fuck* (etc.) is a (partial) realization of the emphatic component of FI, not of its negative component.
  - ‣ This aligns *fuck*-inversion with existing analyses of other polarity-driven inversion phenomena, and captures the post-subject position of the taboo element.

A derivation for FI is below, built on that of CNI in (23) but incorporating the intuitions above:

(33)   Will he fuck (vote for independence).
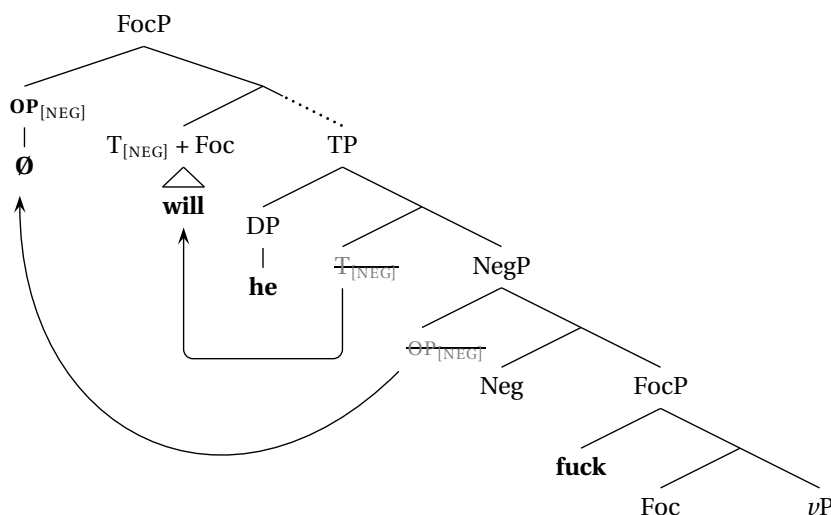
See Appendix 2 for additional support for the claim that FI taboo elements are akin to *too/either*.

5   Conclusion

I've attempted to describe and analyze *fuck*-inversion (FI), a novel inversion phenomenon in British English.

- I hope to have shown that FI is amenable to an analysis akin to those of other polarity-based inversion phenomena (canonical negative inversion, *so/neither*-inversion, etc.)

- Specifically, FI attests a previously-unattested prediction in the typology of inversion phenomena involving left-edge operators:
  - ‣ FI involves a non-overt negative operator, aligning it with both CNI and polar questions.

- Thus, FI fulfills predictions made by prior approaches to similar phenomena, requiring no new technology, and allowing a clearer overall picture of polarity-driven inversion phenomena to emerge.

---

[17]We know the taboo element in FI cannot be the head of PolP: if it were, the NEG-criterion would be satisfied in-situ (see Haegeman 1995:§4.1.4), incorrectly blocking the configuration that triggers inversion.

References

Aboh, Enoch. 1993. Wh-movement in Gun. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Geneva.

Belletti, Adriana. 2004. Aspects of the low IP area. In *The structure of CP and IP*, ed. Luigi Rizzi, volume 2 of *The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*, 16–51. Oxford University Press.

Benincà, Paola, and Cecilia Poletto. 2004. Topic, focus, and V2: Defining the CP sublayers. In *The structure of CP and IP*, ed. Luigi Rizzi, volume 2 of *The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*, 52–75. Oxford University Press.

Brody, Michael. 1990. Some remarks on the focus field in Hungarian. In *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 201–225.

Corver, Norbert. 2014. Recursing in Dutch. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 32:423–457.

Culicover, Peter. 1991. Topicalization, inversion, and complementizers in English. In *Going Romance and beyond*, ed. Denis Delfitto, Martin Everaert, Arnold Evers, and Frits Stuurman, 1–43. Utrecht University: OTS Working Papers.

Dong, Quang Phuc. 1992. English sentences without overt grammatical subject. In *Studies out in left field: Defamatory essays presented to James D. McCawley on the occasion of his 33rd or 34th birthday*, ed. Arnold M. Zwicky, Peter H. Salus, Robert I. Binnick, and Anthony L. Vanek, 3–10. John Benjamins.

Drozd, Kenneth F. 2001. Metalinguistic sentence negation in child English. In *Perspectives on negation and polarity items*, ed. Jack Hoeksema, Hotze Rullmann, Víctor Sánchez-Valencia, and Ton van der Wouden, 49–78. John Benjamins.

Farkas, Donka, and Kim Bruce. 2010. On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics* 27:81–118.

Gajewski, Jon. 2011. Licensing strong NPIs. *Natural Language Semantics* 19:109–148.

Haegeman, Liliane. 1995. *The syntax of negation*, volume 75 of *Cambridge Studies in Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.

Haegeman, Liliane. 2000. Negative preposing, negative inversion, and the split CP. In *Negation and polarity: Syntactic and semantic perspectives*, ed. Laurence Horn and Yasuhiko Kato. Oxford University Press.

Haegeman, Liliane. 2012. *Adverbial clauses, main clause phenomena and the composition of the left periphery*. Oxford University Press.

Haegeman, Liliane, and Raffaella Zanuttini. 1991. Negative heads and the NEG criterion. *The Linguistic Review* 8:233–251.

Horn, Laurence. 1989. *A natural history of negation*. University of Chicago Press.

Horn, Laurence. 2001. Flaubert triggers, squatitive negation and other quirks of grammar. In *Perspectives on negation and polarity items*, ed. Jack Hoeksema, Hotze Rullmann, Víctor Sánchez-Valencia, and Ton van der Wouden, 173–202. John Benjamins.

Horn, Laurence. 2009. Hypernegation, hyponegation, and *parole* violations. In *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, ed. Iksoo Kwon, Hannah Pritchett, and Justin Spence, 403–423. Berkeley Linguistics Society.

Horn, Laurence. 2014. Negative inversion(s) and conspiracy theory. Presented at the 88th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.

Jayaseelan, K.A. 2001. IP-internal topic and focus phrases. *Studia Linguistica* 55:39–75.

Kayne, Richard. 1998. Overt vs. covert movement. *Syntax* 1:128–191.

Klima, Edward. 1964. Negation in English. In *The structure of language*, ed. Jerry Fodor and Jerrold Katz, 246–323. Prentice Hall.

Laka, Itziar. 1990. Negation in syntax: On the nature of functional categories and projections. Doctoral Dissertation, MIT.

Lasnik, Howard. 1972. Analyses of negation in English. Doctoral Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.

Martins, Ana Maria. 2014. How much syntax is there in metalinguistic negation? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 32:635–672.

McCloskey, James. 1993. A crude test for unaccusativity in English. In *Syntax at Santa Cruz*, ed. Geoffrey Pullum and Eric Potsdam, volume 2, 21–24. Santa Cruz: Linguistics Research Center.

McCready, Eric. 2009. What *man* does. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 31:671–724.

Postal, Paul. 2004. The structure of one type of American English vulgar minimizer. In *Skeptical linguistic essays*, chapter 5, 159–172. Oxford University Press.

Postma, Gertjan. 2001. Negative polarity and the syntax of taboo. In *Perspectives on negation and polarity items*, ed. Jack Hoeksema, Hotze Rullmann, Víctor Sánchez-Valencia, and Ton van der Wouden, 283–330. John Benjamins.

Rizzi, Luigi. 1996. Residual verb second and the wh-criterion. In *Parameters and functional heads: Essays in comparative syntax*, ed. Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi, 62–90. Oxford University Press.

Rudanko, Juhani. 1982. Towards a description of negatively conditioned subject operator inversion in English. *English Studies* 63:348–359.

Sailor, Craig. 2014. The variables of VP ellipsis. Doctoral Dissertation, UCLA.

Simons, Mandy. 2007. Observations on embedding verbs, evidentiality, and presupposition. *Lingua* 117:1034–1056.

Wood, Jim. 2008. 'So'-inversion as polarity focus. In *Proceedings of WECOL 38*, ed. Michael Grosvald and Dianne Soares, 304–317. UC Davis.

Wood, Jim. 2014. Affirmative semantics with negative morphosyntax: Negative exclamatives and the New England *So AUXn't NP/DP* construction. In *Micro-syntactic variation in North American English*, ed. Raffaella Zanuttini and Laurence R. Horn, 71–114. Oxford University Press.

Zanuttini, Raffaella. 1991. Syntactic properties of sentential negation: A comparative study of Romance languages. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Appendix 1:   FI doesn't involve a squatitive

One might wonder if *fuck* in FI belongs among the class of so-called *squatitives* (Horn 2001, Postal 2004):

- *Jack shit, (diddly) squat, fuck all*, etc.: "Expressions of scatalogical origin" that have acquired negative force by means of the Jespersen Cycle (i.e. undergoing reanalysis as a negative; cf. French *ne...<u>pas</u>*)

  ‣ However, typical squatitives are thought to be undergoing the process currently, and thus can appear both in the absence of and alongside the standard negative marker (with no change in meaning)

(34)   John didn't do jack shit to help us. = John did jack shit to help us.

  ‣ On the other hand, overt standard negation is impossible with FI (and I know of no evidence that it ever was possible), even when negation is present in its antecedent:[18]

(35)   B: *Isn't he fuck (a nice guy)! ≠ Is he fuck (a nice guy)!

(36)   A: John didn't have a drop to drink last night.
         B: *Didn't he fuck!

Moreover, Postal (2004) notes that canonical squatitives:

- Look and distribute like bare nominals of category DP (FI taboo elements don't);

- Occur in argument positions (FI taboo elements don't); and

- Can be paraphrased as either *anything* or *nothing* (FI taboo elements can't be).

So although FI is an instance of hyponegation, it does not appear to involve a squatitive of the familiar sort.

Appendix 2:   Clause-final taboo elements in FI

Wood (2008, 2014): the focus particle *too* in *so*-inversion can surface in preverbal position, as in (24a) (repeated below), or in final position:

(37)   a.   John is planning to buy an SP-1200, and so too is Mary.
         b.   They play well, but so do we, too.

Kayne (1998): the final position for *too* is derived by short movement of the predicate across the FocP whose specifier hosts *too*.

- If the FI taboo element is akin to Wood and Kayne's treatment of *too*, then it should have the same distribution.

- We've seen it clause-finally, but only when the predicate has been elided. When the predicate is pronounced,

---

[18]I distinguish standard negation here from constituent negation, the latter being fully compatible with FI: *A: John says he's able to not drink at parties. B: Can he fuck not drink!*

the examples thus far have only involved an immediately post-subject taboo element.

▸ However, a post-predicate position for the taboo element is available, to a subset of my consultants from the Midlands and the North of England:[19]

(38) a. A: John says he's gonna steal that car, and I reckon he'll do it.
         B: Will he do it fuck!
      b. Q: Do you reckon John will actually ask that girl out?
         A: Will he {do that / ask her} fuck!

Crucially, this final position for the taboo element is only available when the predicate is entirely <u>given</u> in the discourse, preferentially realized as a predicate anaphor (e.g. *do {it/that}*).

• It is not possible when the FI clause's predicate is discourse-new, i.e. when the FI clause is picking up on an implicature rather than taking an explicit linguistic antecedent:

(39) a. *It's John's birthday tomorrow, but is he going to let anyone give him presents fuck.   *(cf. (11))*
      b. *It's St. Patrick's day tomorrow, but will I be wearing anything green fuck.   *(cf. (18))*

I argue that this is directly parallel to the aforementioned analyses for clause-final *too* described above:

• FI clauses such as (38) involve predicate movement of a specific type across the low FocP hosting the taboo element.

• The discourse-old constraint on post-predicate taboo elements arises because the predicate movement needed to derive this order is <u>Topic</u> movement:

▸ The *v*P moves across the taboo element in the low FocP to a low-peripheral TopP immediately dominating FocP, consistent with the given predicate's information-structural status.

(40)   Will he do it fuck!
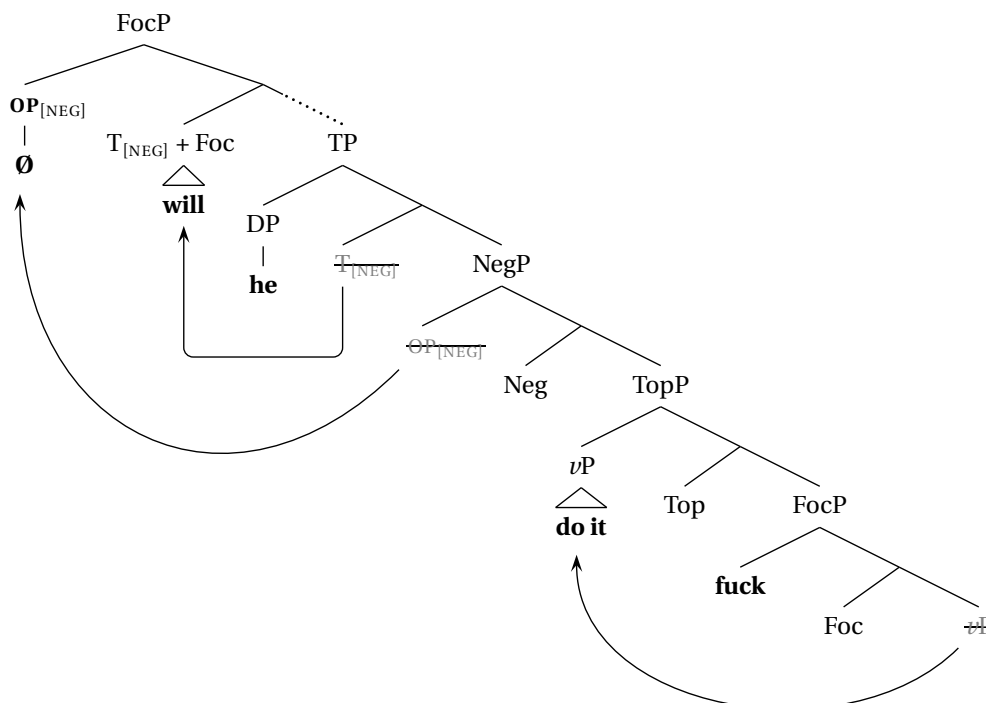
See Jayaseelan (2001) and Belletti (2004) for extensive justification of these low-peripheral positions (and Benincà and Poletto 2004 on TopP > FocP order in particular).

---

[19]Such examples are deemed sharply ungrammatical among my consultants from elsewhere in the British Isles.