

Niko Vitamo

THE AGGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION

Negation Without the Use of Negative Auxiliaries

Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences

Bachelor's Thesis

May 2020

ABSTRACT

Niko Vitamo: The Aggressive Construction
Bachelor's Thesis
Tampere University
Degree Programme in English Language, Literature and Translation
May 2020

Negative clause without a negative auxiliary verb, or, colloquially, the aggressive, is a Finnish clause construction which expresses strong denial or refusal. Contrary to normal negative clause constructions, the aggressive does not contain a negative verb. Instead, the negation is most commonly achieved through the use of a curse word. The construction has received only passing attention from researchers, however, this past research has been sufficient to create a valid list of defining features for the construction.

The question the present study aims to answer is, is there a similar aggressive construction in English that follows the definition the previously done research has created. If there is at least one such construction in English, it would offer a new, possibly useful, perspective from which to inspect the original Finnish aggressive construction. Furthermore, the present study also offers a new perspective into English negative clauses.

The simplest approach to start answering the question was to directly translate the Finnish aggressive constructions into English. These translations produced the first potential English aggressive construction. The construction was then proven as one that exists through the use of corpus data, dictionary data, and native intuition. At this stage, two other possible English aggressive construction were discovered as well. These three possible aggressives were ran through different tests which aimed to discover their syntactic features, and to ascertain whether they truly are aggressive constructions. According to the test results, on technical grounds, none of the three constructions are actually aggressives. While the syntax and use are almost identical to the Finnish aggressive constructions, all three of the potential English aggressive constructions can contain a negative auxiliary verb, and therefore must be dismissed for being in violation of the definition.

However, the definition of the aggressive construction is not entirely true, as it was discovered during the research that some of the Finnish aggressive constructions can, in fact, contain a negative verb. On the basis of this discovery, the definition of the aggressive construction should be re-evaluated into one that allows the existence of a negative verb within the construction. Additionally, this discovery proves the value of inspecting languages from the perspective of other languages, as this discovery might not have been possible without this kind of a new perspective.

Key words

Linguistics, English, Finnish, negative auxiliary, aggressive, negation, taboo words

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE <i>AGGRESSIVE</i> IN FINNISH – LITERATURE REVIEW	1
3 RESEARCH QUESTION	4
4 METHODOLOGY	4
5 THE <i>AGGRESSIVE</i> IN ENGLISH	5
5.1 Kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio	6
5.2 Myöntökielto	7
5.3 Toistokonstruktio	9
5.4 <i>Paskat välitän</i> -construction	10
5.5 Adding <i>if</i>	11
6 THE <i>FUCK IF</i> -CONSTRUCTION	11
6.1 Structure of the <i>fuck if</i> -construction	12
6.1.1 Double negative	12
6.1.2 Question formation	14
6.1.3 <i>Fuck if</i> -construction – conclusion	15
7 SEARCHING FOR OTHER ENGLISH <i>AGGRESSIVE</i> CONSTRUCTIONS	16
7.1 The <i>like hell</i> -construction	17
7.1.1 Structure of the <i>like hell</i> -construction	18
7.1.2 Movement tests and element removal	19
7.1.3 <i>Like hell</i> – Double negative	21
7.1.4 <i>Like hell</i> – forming questions	21
7.2 The <i>the hell</i> -construction	22
8 CONNECTING THE FINNISH AND ENGLISH <i>AGGRESSIVE</i> CONSTRUCTIONS	23
8.1 Revising the defining features of the <i>aggressive</i> construction	23
9 CONCLUSION	24
REFERENCES	26

1 INTRODUCTION

Every language in the world has words that are considered to be taboo. Some of these taboo words are used as direct, precise, insults. For example, slurs which target a specific characteristic of a person belong into this category. Other taboo words have gained a multitude of different uses, as can be seen, for example, from Jesse Sheidlower's book *The F-Word*, where Sheidlower lists numerous different uses for the word "fuck". These more general taboo words hold exceptional potential for the creation of new and innovative constructions, constructions which might not be possible without the use of taboo words. One of these constructions is the Finnish *aggressiivi*. The construction has slipped almost entirely past the academics' eyes, having only received marginal attention.

The purpose of this thesis is to find whether or not English also has an *aggressive* construction, with the hypothesis being that English has one. While this construction might not be exactly identical in the way it is used, for it to be acceptable it should be similar to the Finnish version at least partially. If there is an acceptable *aggressive* construction in English, it is unlikely that the English version is syntactically identical to the Finnish version.

The thesis will first review the little background literature there is, followed by the research question and a presentation of the methodology. Following the methodology are sections consisting of discussion, presentation of results, and analysis. The further breakdown of these sections is as follows: section 5 focuses on finding an English version of the *aggressive* construction through translation, section 6 focuses on the construction found through the translation process, section 7 presents two other potential English *aggressive* constructions, and finally, section 8 strives to connect the Finnish and English *aggressive* constructions. The remaining section, section 9, presents the overall conclusions.

2 THE *AGGRESSIVE* IN FINNISH – LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of the *aggressive* construction can be said to originate from a satirical paper written by Jaakko Häkkinen in 1999. The paper drew some attention from the general public and a few academics. While the paper brought some attention to the *aggressive* construction, nothing much came of it in terms of serious academic work until several years later when Lari Kotilainen wrote about the construction in his doctoral dissertation *Konstruktioiden Dynamiikkaa* (2007). While there certainly are some other related academic works, Kotilainen's dissertation can be said to be the most comprehensive study on the *aggressive* construction available. In his dissertation, Kotilainen

explores the different uses that the construction has, the functions that it has, and the structure of the different types of *aggressive* constructions.

The Finnish *aggressive* is a type of negative clause construction that does not contain a negative auxiliary; a construction in which the negative auxiliary is either omitted or replaced with a curse word (Kotilainen, 2007). The *aggressive* construction is primarily used colloquially, and is especially common during emotionally charged interactions between young adults. The construction can, and usually does, convey an array of negatively charged emotions: frustration, anger, and hate, or it can simply convey the message that the user is in a bad mood. It can, however, be used to attain a somewhat humorous effect when used between friends, and therefore, it should not be considered to universally convey hostility.

Finnish has four syntactically distinct types of *aggressive* constructions, as identified by Kotilainen: *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio* (negative construction without a negating verb), *myöntökieltokonstruktio* (affirmative negative construction), *toistokonstruktio* (repeat construction), and *paskat välitän -konstruktio* (I don't give a shit construction). The first three of these constructions are generally used as responses to questions, requests, and demands, while the fourth construction has a somewhat different use.

The structure of the four constructions is roughly as follows:

Kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio

((curse word) + pronoun/subject + verb complements and adverbs + negative main verb)

(Vittu) minä mitään tiedä!

Myöntökieltokonstruktio

(singular or plural curse word + pronoun/subject + verb complements and adverbs + affirmative main verb)

Vitut minä mitään tiedän!

Toistokonstruktio

(plural curse word + affirmative main verb)

Vitut tiedän!

Paskat välitän -konstruktio

((subject) + plural curse word + *välittää* -verb + verb complements)

Minä paskat välitän siitä!

Out of these four constructions, the first one, *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio*, is what can be considered to be the basic *aggressive* construction, and the other three constructions can be said to be derived from it.

The possibility of omitting the negative verb, which is only possible in the *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio*, has also been described as "the ellipsis of the negative verb" -phenomenon, but recent data does not support this. Instead, the construction created by the omission of the negative verb has become relatively standardized (Kotilainen, 2007).

The omission of the negative verb is not the only feature of interest that the *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio* has: the construction appears in a context where something that has been previously said is being negated. Additionally, the construction tends to contain negative polarity items, which are there to strengthen the negativity of the construction. Structurally the construction has a verb in its final position, with most, if not all, of the verb's complements falling in front of the verb (Kotilainen, 2007). While this construction is perfectly grammatical without the curse word, it is to be noted that using the curse word sounds more natural to Finnish speakers.

The second construction, *myöntökielto*, differs from the first mainly by the fact that the curse word, particularly the plural form of the curse word, is almost always obligatory. The reason for the obligatory use of the curse word results mainly from the use of the affirmative form of the main verb; the construction, in other words, needs an element that strengthens its negativity. Apart from these features, the construction functions and looks the same as the first construction (Kotilainen, 2007).

The third construction, *toistokonstruktio*, as its name implies (repeat construction), relies heavily on a previously stated piece of information. This is due to the simple structure of the construction. The construction has only two elements in it, the curse word in its plural form and a verb. The construction, therefore, does not provide much information and has to rely on context; without context, the construction simply does not make sense.

The fourth and final construction, *paskat välitän -konstruktio*, functions differently from the three previous constructions, mainly due to it not always being used in contexts where it negates something which was previously said, it not always being used in a reactive manner, and it being used to bring new information into a conversation. The word order of the construction is also different from the other three: the subject of a clause tends to precede the curse word, while in the other three constructions the curse word is in the clause initial position. According to Kotilainen, many constructions develop around prototypical verbs, and *välittää* is a prime example of such verbs.

3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Whether there is a construction in English that can be considered to be an *aggressive* construction is the primary question which this thesis aims to answer. If one such prospective *aggressive* construction is found, the goal is to explore the construction further as to ascertain whether it truly is an *aggressive* construction or not; what kinds of features the construction has and are the features sufficiently similar to those found in the Finnish *aggressive* construction? Furthermore, if more than one prospective English *aggressive* construction is found, can all of the constructions be considered *aggressive* constructions or not; do they share enough defining features, do they have a similar syntactic structure, are they used in similar fashion, and how do they differ from each other? By finding answers to these questions, and then comparing the findings to what has been found on the Finnish *aggressive* constructions, it should be possible to conclude whether there is a valid *aggressive* construction in English or not.

4 METHODOLOGY

The first step taken in finding out if English has an *aggressive* construction was to define what an *aggressive* construction is. This was done by using the definition given by Kotilainen in his 2007 doctoral dissertation *Konstruktoiden dynamiikkaa*. The Finnish *aggressive* constructions were then translated directly into English. This translation process, unsurprisingly, resulted in ungrammatical English clauses. The resulting ungrammatical clauses were then, step by step, made into grammatical ones, which in the end resulted in the first English *aggressive* construction: the *fuck if* -construction. To prove that the *fuck if*-construction actually exists, corpus data, belonging to the *reduced redundancy USENET corpus*, was used. The corpus was selected because the data recorded in it was collected from different online chats, which was of utmost importance since the *aggressive* is primarily a construction which is used colloquially. The fact that online chats are close to actual real life conversations and are recorded rather than fleeting, made this particular corpus a logical choice. The corpus is composed of roughly seven billion words, collected in between 2005 and 2011 from across the internet.

The second English *aggressive* construction, the *like hell*-construction, was discovered through observation. Its existence was proven through the use of dictionary data. Three different online dictionaries were used for this purpose, and all of the three dictionaries acknowledged that the construction exists and attributed similar meaning to the *like hell*-construction, thus proving its existence.

The third construction, the *the hell*-construction, was, as was the case with the *like hell*-construction, discovered through observation. The existence of this construction was proved through the use of native judgement tasks, mainly due to the difficulties, primarily the large number of false positives, encountered when perusing corpus and dictionary data.

These three constructions were then subjected to a number of movement tests, tests involving removing or adding elements, and tests which aimed to turn the constructions into questions or double negatives. Through these tests it was discovered that the three constructions share a number of different features between each other, that the constructions vary in formality and aggressiveness, and that all of the constructions have the same function as their Finnish counterparts. Furthermore, the purpose of the tests involving question formation was to show that the used curse words are not just novel versions of negative auxiliaries.

The three English constructions were then examined in order to find whether they adhere to the definitions given by Kotilainen or not. By doing this, it became apparent that the English constructions were not *aggressive* constructions as they could contain a negative auxiliary. However, this problem was solved by revising what the defining features of an *aggressive* construction were. This revision was necessary after it was found that some Finnish *aggressive* constructions can in fact contain a negative auxiliary. The end result of the revision thus brought both the Finnish *aggressive* constructions and the English *aggressive* constructions together, with the new main defining feature of containing a curse word which acts as a negator.

5 THE *AGGRESSIVE* IN ENGLISH

It would not be surprising if it were claimed that it is impossible to find identical, or close to identical, constructions to the *aggressive* in English. In order to explore whether or not there even is a somewhat similar construction in English, some rudimentary tests are in order. The following sections will describe every previously outlined Finnish *aggressive* construction, in order to find a grammatically fitting form for them in English while following the rough rules which govern the Finnish versions of these constructions. An important difference between the two languages to note, is that English does not generally have negative verbs, but instead uses negative auxiliary verbs, such as *no* and *not*, as opposed to Finnish where the negative version of a verb is formed through a combination of affixation, or the lack of affixation, and negative auxiliary verbs.

5.1 Kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio

While directly translating the construction from Finnish to English does not in most cases produce a grammatical clause, it is a good place to start. Following the rough guidelines set in section 2 and translating the Finnish clause into English, it is possible to create a construction which can be used to serve as the foundation for what is to come. *Vittu* will be translated into *fuck*, as both of these curse words work in an almost identical manner, even if their base meaning is different. To be noted is that some other curse words, such as *damn* or *darn*, can be used instead of *fuck*, and others, such as *(the) Hell* and *shit*, cannot be used as freely, as their usage will, in most cases, result in an ungrammatical construction.

((curse word) + pronoun/subject + verb complements and adverbs + negative main verb)

(1) (*Vittu*) *minä mitään tiedä!*

(2) (*Fuck*) *I anything know!*

As expected, the resulting English clause is ungrammatical. The word order is the first, and easiest, part to fix:

(3) *(*Fuck*) I know anything!

The resulting clause, however, is yet to be grammatical, and additionally, the clause is not a negative one as it does not contain an element serving as a negator. As was stated at the end of section 5, English, in most cases, uses negative auxiliary verbs to form negative constructions. However, one of the main features of the *aggressive* is the lack of a negative auxiliary, and as such, adding a negative auxiliary verb into the construction is out of question. Fortunately, there is a negative version of *anything* in English: *nothing*. Thus, the next logical step will be to replace *anything* with *nothing*:

(4) *(*Fuck*) I know nothing!

The resulting clause is, by all means, grammatical, and *fuck* can be safely omitted. This does, however, introduce a new problem: can *fuck* be included in the main clause? The original Finnish construction can either include or omit the curse word, and when the curse word is included, it is included as a part of the main clause. This is not possible in the English version, at least not without further changes to the construction. If *fuck* is left as is, the only way for the

resulting clause to be grammatical, is to separate the *fuck* from the main clause:

(5) Fuck, I know nothing!

However, this does not create a real *aggressive* construction, as there is no real negation apart from *nothing* in the clause, and a negative polarity item by itself is not enough to form a valid *aggressive* construction. In order to create a negating element in the clause, further modification is required: the addition of *if*. Placing *if* in between the curse word and the subject turns the previously plain curse word into a negator, which is exemplified by the fact that by adding *if*, both (3) and (4) can be turned into grammatical clauses:

(6) Fuck if I know nothing!

(7) Fuck if I know anything!

The meaning of the original Finnish clause (1) is, that the speaker says that he does not know anything, and as such, example (6), which implies that the speaker knows something, is not in line with the meaning of the original Finnish clause. However, example (6) is fully grammatical. The implications resulting from the grammaticality of (6) will be explored further in the sections concerning double negative constructions, but for the moment, (6) can be dismissed as its meaning differs from the meaning of the Finnish clause. However, the meaning of (7) is the same as the meaning of the Finnish clause, and thus, (7) is comparable to the Finnish *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio*. Ultimately, for (7) to be acceptable, it must be possible to omit the curse word. This is, however, not possible, as can be seen from (4). Therefore, English does not have a direct syntactic counterpart for the Finnish *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio* as the curse word must be optional.

5.2 *Myöntökielto*

The same method used previously with the *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio* can be used with *myöntökielto*, as both of the constructions are fairly similar to each other. Again, to start the process, a direct translation will be made:

(singular or plural curse word + pronoun/subject + verb complements and adverbs + affirmative main verb)

(8) *Vitut minä mitään tiedän!*

(9) *Fucks I anything knows!*

Again, easiest part to fix is the word order:

(10) *Fucks I knows anything!

The problem that arises now, is the fact that English first person pronouns do not agree with the *-s* ending of the verb. However, if the pronoun was a third person singular, then the *-s* ending would be in order, but, since the pronoun used here is the first person singular, removing the *-s* ending is necessary:

(11) *Fucks I know anything!

The resulting clause looks fairly similar to the clause in (3), and therefore, it is only logical to use the same process which was used in (4) - (7) to turn the clause into a grammatical one. The resulting clause is as follows:

(12) *Fucks if I know anything!

However, the clause is not yet grammatical; the plural marker *-s* attached to the word *fuck* is problematic, and therefore, in order to turn the clause into one that is grammatical, the plural marker must be removed:

(13) Fuck if I know anything!

The resulting clause is identical to the one in (7). Although the meaning of the clause is almost identical to the meaning of any clause utilizing the *myöntökielto* -construction, the clause does not follow the rules governing the *myöntökielto* -construction, and therefore it must be concluded that English does not have a direct syntactic counterpart to the Finnish *myöntökielto* -construction.

5.3 *Toistokonstruktio*

The *toistokonstruktio* is primarily used to immediately negate a statement given by another speaker. In many cases, the immediateness of the *toistokonstruktio* leads to the outright interruption of the first speaker. Due to this immediateness of use, the *toistokonstruktio* is completely reliant on the context, as the construction itself does not provide enough information for the listeners. The phrases produced by the *toistokonstruktio* are short, generally consisting of only two words, and perhaps due to this, they tend to be perceived as more aggressive than any of the phrases produced by the other *aggressive* constructions. Again, the first step to be taken is to directly translate a Finnish clause into English:

(plural curse word + affirmative main verb)

(14) *Vitut tiedän!*

(15) **Fucks I knows!*

The pronoun does not agree with the form of the verb, and the plural marker of *fuck* is a problem, and therefore, these have to be removed:

(16) ?Fuck I know!

The resulting clause is, at least if it is inspected in a void, borderline ungrammatical. However, if it is inspected in context, it seems plausible, but nevertheless, marked:

(17) Speaker 1: Do you know that elephants...

Speaker 2: ?Fuck I know!

In addition to the markedness, the result is also somewhat ambiguous. The aggressiveness of the speaker is communicated clearly, but it is not clear whether the speaker is answering "yes" or "no" by using the construction. Adding *if* after *fuck* fixes this:

(18) Speaker 1: Do you know that elephants...

Speaker 2: Fuck if I know!

To conclude with the *toistokonstruktio*, the English version is, yet again, syntactically

different when compared to the Finnish *aggressive*, mainly due to the English version being unable to use the plural form of *fuck*, and *fuck* requiring *if* as an accompanying element. The English version is, however, used in similar fashion, and tends to function in the same way as the Finnish *toistokonstruktio*.

5.4 *Paskat välitän* -construction

In English, there is an existing construction that has the exact same meaning and use as the *paskat välitän* -construction:

(19) I don't give a shit!

This construction, however, does not meet the requirements of being an *aggressive* construction as it has a negative auxiliary verb in it. Removing the negative auxiliary from the construction has the effect of turning the construction into an affirmative one, which is, again, not in accordance with the rules of the *aggressive* construction. The easy way out is to use the *fuck if* phrase in the place of *do not* and to move the *fuck if* phrase into the clause initial position, which does indeed yield a grammatical English clause:

(20) Fuck if I give a shit!

This construction does not fall in line with the original Finnish construction syntactically. However, it does have the same meaning and use as the Finnish clauses produced by the *paskat välitän* -construction, and does not have a negative auxiliary verb in it. By using the previous method of translating and fitting the Finnish clause into English yields a somewhat different result:

((subject) + plural curse word + *välittää* -verb + verb complements)

(21) Minä paskat välitän siitä!

(22) *I shits care about it!

The English version can easily be turned into a grammatical one by removing *shits*, and replacing it with *do not*:

(21) I do not care about it!

This clause, however, has a negative auxiliary in it, and as such, more work needs to be done with the clause. By replacing *do not* with *fuck if* and moving *fuck if* to the clause initial position, a grammatical clause can be formed:

(22) Fuck if I care about it!

The resulting clause, however grammatical it is, is syntactically very different from the clauses produced by the Finnish *paskat välitän* -construction. The meaning and use of (22) are the same as the *paskat välitän* -construction, but due to the syntactic differences, it can be concluded that English does not have a direct syntactic counterpart for the Finnish *paskat välitän* -construction.

5.5 Adding *if*

The addition of *if* in the previous sections might seem arbitrary, but the end result is, according to the intuition of native English speakers, grammatically correct. Intuition is not, however, on its own completely reliable, and therefore, it would be useful to have further proof that adding *if* into the examples is in fact a correct way to turn the clauses into grammatical ones. To this end, a good way to proceed is to find whether or not people actually use the *fuck if* -construction. According to the data in *A reduced redundancy USENETcorpus* (Shaoul, C. & Westbury C.), and several entries recorded in *The F-Word* (Sheidlower, 2009), people do, in fact, use the construction discovered here, and the way the construction is used is almost identical to the Finnish *aggressive* constructions. The construction will, from this point onwards, be referred to as the *fuck if* -construction.

6 THE *FUCK IF* -CONSTRUCTION

Due to the slight syntactic dissimilarity of having an *if*, it would be easy to dismiss the *fuck if* -construction as not being a valid *aggressive* construction. However, doing this would be a mistake, as both the function of the construction, and the way the construction is used, are identical to the function and use of the Finnish *aggressive* constructions. To resolve whether or not the *fuck if* -construction can truly be classified as an *aggressive*, a more in-depth look into the inner workings of the construction is required.

6.1 Structure of the *fuck if* -construction

The examples in the previous sections and the corpus data show, that English language has a functionally similar construction to that of the Finnish *aggressive* -construction. The English version, however, is partly different. While the Finnish *aggressive* is varied, as it has four different variants, the English version seems to focus around one variant, the *fuck if* -construction. Building a rough model for the construction is relatively simple:

(*fuck if* + subject + verb + rest of the elements)

(23) Fuck if I know anything about that!

To test the validity of the model, the elements can be moved around:

(24) *If fuck I know anything about that!

(25) *Fuck I if know anything about that!

(26) *About that fuck if I know!

(27) *Fuck if about that I know!

(28) *I know fuck if about that!

The major elements in the *fuck if* -construction cannot be rearranged, and, as is evident from the examples (24) and (25), *fuck* and *if* cannot be separated from each other and must appear as *fuck if*. The *fuck* and its accompanying *if* are always in the clause initial position, with the subject of the clause being the next element. The verb of the clause is located after the subject, with the rest of the elements of the clause placed in the clause final position.

6.1.1 Double negative

A double negative generally results in one of two different outcomes: the double negative either becomes a positive, or remains negative. In standard English, a double negative is not an ungrammatical construction, although many believe it to be so, and is far more ubiquitous than it is thought to be. Standard English double negative always results in a positive, while the other outcome is considered to be ungrammatical. Two simple examples of a standard English double negative are as follows:

(29) This is not ungrammatical

(30) I do not disagree

The clause in (29) has one distinct negator: *not*, and another one affixed to the front of *grammatical*: *un-*. The prefix *un-* negates the word *grammatical*, while the word *not* negates the prefix *un-*. The negation works in a similar fashion in (30), as it also has one distinct negator: *not*, and another in the form of a prefix: *dis-*, the latter which negates the main verb *agree*, and the former which negates the prefix *dis-*. The resulting construction in (29) roughly means "This is grammatical", and in (30) "I agree". However, the double negative construction does have some subtle differences in comparison to the constructions without negation, such as intensity, and the fact that the double negative is far more capable of holding multiple covert meanings, which do not enter into consideration in the constructions without negation. Also, to note, is that the acceptable double negative in standard English is not achieved through syntactic means, but through morphology.

The double negative which results in a negative is not a grammatical construction in standard English. It is, however, a commonplace construction in some vernaculars, such as the African American Vernacular English. A common example would be:

(31) Ain't nobody got time for that!

In the case of (31), the double negative is used to intensify the negation, rather than for changing the subtleties of the meaning, which is evident if the first negating element is removed from the clause:

(32) Nobody got time for that

While the resulting clause is arguably somewhat marked in standard English, the base meaning remains the same. It should also be noted, that other analyses of (31) are possible. However, the primary focus of this paper is not on the vernacular, and therefore, this avenue of inquiry will not be pursued further.

Creating a double negative by using the *fuck if*-construction is simple. In accordance to the rules set before, simple examples of such constructions are as follows, taken from *A reduced redundancy USENETcorpus*:

(33) Fuck if you aren't dumb as a brick!

(34) fuck if the swing of your step don't make me dance to his jolly tune

Both (33) and (34) have two negators in them: *fuck if*, and *not* (-n't), the latter which negates *are* in (33) and , and the former which negates the negation brought by *not*. The effect of this double negative is, in effect, the same as in (29) and (30), which both result in a positive. However, neither (33) or (34) rely on an affixed negator in order to produce a grammatical English double negative. Furthermore, creating a triple negative construction is also possible through the use of *fuck if*:

(35) Fuck if this is not ungrammatical!

Here the first negator, *fuck if*, negates the positive meaning of the already present double negative, or so it would seem at first glance, as it is possible that instead of negating the already present double negative, *fuck if* only negates the following negating element. Regardless of what exactly *fuck if* negates, whether or not the clause is ultimately a negative or a positive depends on the number of negators in it. If the clause has an even number of negators, the end result is positive, as the negators cancel each other out, and when there is an odd number of negators in a given clause, the end result is a negative.

In conclusion, by using the *fuck if* -construction, it is possible to create syntactic double negative constructions in standard English. Furthermore, it does not seem like it matters whether *fuck if* negates only the following negating element, or whether it negates every other negating element present in the clause; as long as the negating elements come in even numbers, they cancel each other out, and if the negating elements come in odd numbers, the remaining unpaired negating element turns the clause into a negative one.

6.1.2 Question formation

Questions can be categorized into two main groups in English: *yes-no* questions and *wh-* questions. While there are other types of questions, tag questions for example, the focus will be on the two main types. In order to form a *yes-no* question, subject-auxiliary inversion is required, for example:

(36) He can eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick.

(37) Can he eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

As can be seen from the examples, the subject *He* and the modal, *can*, switch places with each other when the question is formed. The *yes-no* question clauses can also contain a negative auxiliary verb:

(38) Can he not eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

(39) Can't he eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

As was previously demonstrated, *fuck if* acts as a negator in the *fuck if* clauses, and therefore it might be possible to use *fuck if* in place of *not* in (38) and (39). This, however, is not possible. Replacing the negative auxiliary verb in (38) and (39) with *fuck if* results invariably in ungrammatical clauses, which is also the case when *can't* as a whole is replaced:

(40) *Can he fuck if eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

(41) *Fuck if he eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

(42) *Can fuck if he eat a full bowl of borscht without getting sick?

Wh- questions are equally problematic to form with the *fuck if*-construction. If either the contracted (44) or uncontracted (45) negative auxiliary is replaced with *fuck if*, the resulting clause is ungrammatical, as is the case with the clause created by replacing *didn't* as a whole (46).

(43) Why didn't you come over?

(44) *Why did fuck if you come over?

(45) *Why did you fuck if come over?

(46) *Why fuck if you come over?

6.1.3 *Fuck if*-construction - conclusion

It does not seem to be possible to use *fuck if* in question clauses; the clauses resulting from the insertion of *fuck if* are invariably ungrammatical. Furthermore, *fuck if* cannot be used simply as a replacement for *not*. This demonstrates that *fuck if* and *not*, while both act as negators, are not the same; *fuck if* is not simply a novel alternative for *not*. The different double negative constructions built using *fuck if* show, that *fuck if* does indeed act as a negator. However, the fact that the *fuck if*-construction can contain a negative auxiliary verb makes the originally given rough model

(repeated here for convenience) suspect.

(fuck if + subject + verb + rest of the elements)

The model fails to account for auxiliaries and negative auxiliaries, and therefore the model must be revised. For the sake of clarity, the different variants of the construction are separated and presented on their own.

(fuck if + subject + auxiliary + (rest of the elements))

Fuck if he did!

(fuck if + subject + negative auxiliary + (rest of the elements))

Fuck if he didn't!

(fuck if + subject + verb + (rest of the elements))

Fuck if he jumped!

(fuck if + subject + negative auxiliary + verb + (rest of the elements))

Fuck if he didn't jump!

With the possibility of the *fuck if*-construction containing the negative auxiliary verbs accounted for, the model is complete. However, the possibility that the *fuck if*-construction can contain negative auxiliaries is a fatal flaw. One of the most important defining factors that the Finnish *aggressive* construction has, is that the *aggressive* constructions cannot contain negative auxiliaries. Therefore, the *fuck if*-construction is not an *aggressive* construction, however close the meaning and use of the clauses produced by the *fuck if*-construction are to the clauses produced by the Finnish *aggressive* constructions.

7 SEARCHING FOR OTHER ENGLISH *AGGRESSIVE* CONSTRUCTIONS

The method used to discover the *fuck if*-construction is not without its faults; it is extremely reliant on the source language, Finnish in this case, and there is a risk of suffering from tunnel vision. Therefore, in order to discover further potential English *aggressive* constructions, other methods are

necessary. Indeed, by using two other methods, scouring through dictionary data and pure observation, further two English *aggressive* candidates were discovered; the *like hell* -construction and the *the hell* -construction.

7.1 The *like hell* -construction

The *like hell* -construction, as defined by Macmillan dictionary, is "used for showing that you doubt something or do not believe it", and is accompanied by the following example:

- (47) S1: He'll change his mind.
S2: Like hell he will!

Collins dictionary defines the construction as "an expression of strong disagreement with a previous statement, request, order, etc", and gives the following as an example:

- (48) S1: I'll go by myself.
S2: Like hell you will!

Finally, the definition given by Cambridge dictionary gives the construction the meaning of "certainly not", and dictionary's example is:

- (49) S1: Try to be polite.
S2: Like hell I will!

All three of the dictionaries give the expression a similar definition of firm disagreement with what has been previously stated. What can be added to the dictionary definitions, is that the expression is impolite and aggressive in its nature, and thus very informal. Furthermore, the use of the *like hell* -construction is almost identical to how the Finnish *toistokonstruktio* is used. These features, therefore, make the *like hell* -construction a promising *aggressive* candidate. However, in order to determine whether the construction is an actual *aggressive* or not, testing is required.

7.1.1 Structure of the *like hell* -construction

Structurally, the construction is fairly simple. The first element in the construction is *like*, followed by *hell*. The subject, which can be almost any noun, follows *hell*. Although the examples found in the dictionaries only have *will* in the final position, the final position can be occupied by some other auxiliaries or modals, primarily depending on which auxiliary or modal the first speaker used:

- (50) S1: You can sprout a pair of wings and fly if you try hard enough.
S2: Like hell I can!
- (51) S1: I am the king of the world baby!
S2: Like hell you are!
- (52) S1: You are, without a doubt, guilty!
S2: Like hell I am!
- (53) S1: Really, they truly are real vampires!
S2: Like hell they are!
- (54) S1: The ancients could even move mountains with just the power of their minds.
S2: Like hell they could!
- (55) S1: Both of us had an odd rash down there.
S2: Like hell we had!
- (56) S1: You may leave now.
S2: ?Like hell I may!
- (57) S1: You might want to try this one out.
S2: ?Like hell I might!

As can be seen from (56) and (57), the use of some of the auxiliaries, while their use is technically possible, produce marked constructions. This most likely has to do with the amicable nature of the auxiliaries used in these two examples. This demonstrates that not all auxiliaries can be used freely in the *like hell* -construction. Furthermore, in addition to most nouns, any and all pronouns can be used in the construction, which is also true for the Finnish *toistokonstruktio*, although in the Finnish versions the grammatical person is expressed through affixation and the use of nouns other than pronouns is almost impossible.

The *like hell* -construction can also partly, or fully, repeat what the first speaker has uttered, effectively echoing the utterance:

(58) S1: You can sprout a pair of wings and fly if you try hard enough.

S2: Like hell I can sprout a pair of wings and fly!

or S2: Like hell I can do that!

(59) S1: I am the king of the world baby!

S2: Like hell you are the king of the world!

Therefore, a fitting model for the *like hell* -construction is as follows:

(Like hell + subject + auxiliary/modal/contracted negative auxiliary + (rest of the elements))

Like hell you are (the king of the world)!

7.1.2 Movement tests and element removal

As the dictionary examples show, the first two elements in *like hell* clauses are *like*, followed by *hell*. In order to ascertain whether this is truly the case or just a mere coincidence, a few movement tests are in order:

(60) *I like hell will!

(61) I will like hell!

(62) *Like I hell will!

(63) *Hell like I will!

(64) *Like I will hell!

(65) *Hell I will like!

All of the clauses created by moving *like* and *hell* around are ungrammatical, with the exception of (61) which, while not ungrammatical, is not a *like hell* -construction, but a statement that the speaker will like hell. Furthermore, these examples prove that *like* and *hell* must appear in that order, and that *like* and *hell* cannot be separated from each other, though it may be possible to remove either *like* or *hell* from the construction.

The removal of *like* from the *like hell* -construction results invariably in a marked clause:

(66) ?Hell I will!

(67) ?Hell you will!

- (68) ?Hell I would!
- (69) ?Hell you would!
- (70) ?Hell I can!
- (71) ?Hell you can!

The exact reason for the markedness of these resulting clauses is not entirely clear, but what is evident from the markedness of the clauses is that *hell* requires another element in order for the clauses to be grammatical.

In stark contrast to removing *like* from the *like hell* -construction, removing *hell* from the construction results only in ungrammatical clauses:

- (72) *Like I will!
- (73) *Like you will!
- (74) *Like I would!
- (75) *Like you would!
- (76) *Like I can!
- (77) *Like you can!
- (78) *Like I could!
- (79) *Like you could!

However, if these ungrammatical clauses are preceded by, for example, a grunt of some sort acting as a negator, the clause is produced in a sufficiently dismissive manner, and more elements reflecting what a previous speaker has said are added, some of the clauses become borderline acceptable:

- (80) S1: Don't you dare eat that pie while I'm away!
S2: Nah, like I would do something like that.

Regardless of whether or not the clauses from which *hell* has been removed can somehow be made grammatical, it is clear that the *like hell* -construction has to have both *like* and *hell* in it; without them, the construction ceases to be an *aggressive*.

7.1.3 *Like hell* – Double negative

In section 6.1.1 it was demonstrated that by using the *fuck if*-construction, it is possible to create grammatically correct syntactic double negative constructions, and for this to happen, *fuck if* has to act as a negator. Whether this property is unique to the *fuck if*-construction or not can be tested by switching out *fuck if* and replacing it with *like hell*. (33), repeated below for convenience, will be used for this test.

- (33) Fuck if you aren't dumb as a brick!
- (81) *Like hell you aren't dumb as a brick!
- (82) *Like hell if you aren't dumb as a brick!

Directly converting a *fuck if*-construction into a *like hell*-construction results in an ungrammatical clause (81). Furthermore, even if *if* is left in, the result is ungrammatical, as can be seen from (82). This would suggest that the *like hell*-construction can not generate grammatical double negatives. However, this is not true. While it is certain that *like hell* can not be used in this manner in more complex clauses, it can be used in simpler clauses in order to create a grammatical double negative:

- (83) Like hell I won't!
- (84) Like hell I wouldn't!
- (85) ?Like hell I will not!

Interestingly, as can be seen from (85), using the uncontracted form of *not* creates a marked construction. The explanation for this might be that the *like hell*-construction appears primarily in spoken English, and thus *like hell* demands the use of the less formal contracted form of *not* instead of the more formal uncontracted form *-n't*. This, in addition to not being able to be used in some more complex clauses, would suggest that the *like hell*-construction is distinctly different from the *fuck if*-construction. Furthermore, the possibility of forming double negative constructions proves, that *like hell* in the *like hell*-constructions indeed acts as a negator.

7.1.4 *Like hell* – forming questions

As was established in the previous section, *like hell* acts as a negator in the *like hell*-constructions.

However, *like hell* can not be used to outright replace the negative auxiliary in question clauses; the resulting clauses are invariably ungrammatical:

- (86) Can't you squeeze water out of a rock?
- (87) *Can like hell you squeeze water out of a rock?
- (88) Why can't you squeeze water out of a rock?
- (89) *Why can like hell you squeeze water out of a rock?

Both (86), a fairly simple *yes-no* question clause, and (88), a *wh-* question clause, turn into ungrammatical clauses when the negative auxiliary is replaced with *like hell*. Therefore, while *like hell* does act as a negator, it can not be used to replace the negative auxiliary in question clauses; while both act as negators, *like hell* and negative auxiliaries are different.

7.2 The *the hell* -construction

On the surface, the similarity between the *the hell* -construction and the *like hell* -construction is striking, however, the two constructions are, in fact, different. Due to the *like hell* -construction and the *the hell* -construction being almost identical, both on the surface level and in the way they are used, the focus in this subsection will be on what makes the two constructions different.

Apart from the obvious difference of using *the* instead of *like*, the one notable structural difference between the two constructions is that the *the hell* -construction can not repeat in full what has been previously stated, whereas the *like hell* -construction, as (58) and (59) demonstrate, can:

- (90) S1: You can carry an elephant in your backpack.
S2: *The hell I can carry an elephant in my backpack.
- (91) S1: We will go there and rob a bank tomorrow.
S2: *The hell we will go there and rob a bank tomorrow!

The apparent reason for this, as reported by native English speakers, is that the *the hell* -construction is more aggressive, less formal, and "snappier" than the *like hell* -construction. The other features of the *the hell* -construction are the same as the ones that the *like hell* -construction has. Therefore, taking these points into account, the resulting model for the *the hell* -construction is as follows:

(The hell + pronoun + auxiliary/modal/contracted negative auxiliary)

The hell I will!

The hell I can!

The hell I can't!

8 CONNECTING THE FINNISH AND ENGLISH *AGGRESSIVE* CONSTRUCTIONS

The three English constructions have a number of similar features. The base clause is the same: the clause has the curse word with its accompanying element, *the*, *if*, or *like*, in the first position, followed by a pronoun, or possibly some other noun, and an auxiliary in the final position. All of the constructions can be used to form syntactic double negatives due to the curse word and its accompanying element acting as a negator, and thus allowing two negators to occur within the same clause. None of these curse words acting as negators can be used to outright replace a negative auxiliary, as the position in which they can be placed is different. All three of the constructions are extremely informal and aggressive, although the aggressiveness of the constructions is different, with *fuck if*-construction being the least aggressive and *the hell*-construction being the most aggressive of the three.

Compared to the defining features of the Finnish *aggressive* constructions, a few features of the English constructions, informality and aggressiveness, and the use of a curse negator, are the same. Another feature of the English constructions, the possibility of them containing a negative auxiliary, however, disqualifies the English constructions as *aggressive* constructions. Yet, there is the possibility that the defining features given by Kotilainen do not fully reflect what makes an *aggressive* construction an *aggressive*.

8.1 Revising the defining features of the *aggressive* construction

There are two reasons why the defining features of the *aggressive* constructions should be revised: first, the English constructions and the Finnish *aggressives* are identical in the way they are used and in the way they function, which by itself may not be enough to warrant a revision. However, the second reason, the fact that the defining features fail to acknowledge some Finnish constructions, which are unmistakably *aggressive* constructions, does.

(92) Vitut jos en tuu!

(93) Paskat jos en välitä!

Both (92) and (93) utilize *jos* to include a negative auxiliary verb, and both of them are grammatical *aggressive* constructions. Therefore, the lack of a negative auxiliary verb should not be considered to be a defining feature of an *aggressive* construction. Instead, a feature which better defines whether a given construction is or is not an *aggressive* is whether or not the construction uses a curse word as a negator, as this feature is present in both all of the Finnish *aggressive* constructions and the English constructions, with the exception of the Finnish baseline *kieltoverbitön kieltokonstruktio* in which the curse word can be omitted.

9 CONCLUSION

In order to find whether English has an *aggressive* construction that can be regarded as analogous with the Finnish construction, multiple tests were conducted on the three different discovered English constructions. The movement tests were used to examine the syntax of the English constructions, and the tests involving question formation were used to show that the curse negators, *fuck if*, *like hell*, and *the hell*, are different from the negative auxiliaries and not just novel replacements for them, a point which is further reinforced by the fact that the curse negators can be used to form grammatically correct syntactic double negatives. However, according to the defining features of the Finnish *aggressive*, an *aggressive* construction can not contain a negative auxiliary. This problem was solved by revising the defining features of the *aggressive* construction; instead of being defined by the lack of a negative auxiliary, the *aggressive* constructions are primarily defined by the use of a curse negator. With the revised defining features of the *aggressive* construction, the hypothesis that the English language has an *aggressive* construction holds true. Furthermore, the English *aggressives* are syntactically surprisingly similar to their Finnish counterparts, are used in the same way, and function in a similar manner. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that English does have, at the very least, three *aggressive* constructions: the *fuck if*-construction, the *like hell*-construction, and the *the hell*-construction.

While the findings here are somewhat limited in scope, they can be used to serve as a foundation for future studies. Going into finer detail, for example, exploring the scope of negation or the interaction between the curse negators and negative polarity items, or studying whether languages other than Finnish or English have *aggressive* constructions or not, are areas which warrant further inspection. Of exceptional interest, when it comes to other languages, are languages

in which different taboo words are not used as liberally as they are in Finnish and English, such as Japanese. Exploring other languages could perhaps confirm that the *aggressive* constructions are not unique to Finnish and English, but are also present in other languages as well.

REFERENCES

- Häkkinen, Jaakko. "Satirical paper on *aggressive*". (1999). <http://li.kyuu.org/aggressiivi.txt>
- Sheidlower, Jesse. *The F-word*. 3rd ed. (2009). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kotilainen, Lari. *Konstruktoiden Dynamiikkaa*. (2007). University of Helsinki, PhD dissertation (article-based). <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-10-4442-7> .
- Shaoul, C. & Westbury C. (2013) *A reduced redundancy USENET corpus* (2005-2011) Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.
<http://www.psych.ualberta.ca/~westburylab/downloads/usenetcorpus.download.html>
- "like hell". *Collins English Dictionary*. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/like-hell>. Accessed 1.3.2019.
- "like hell". *Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/like-hell>. Accessed 1.3.2019.
- "like hell". *Macmillan Dictionary*. <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/like-hell>. Accessed 1.3.2019.