

Kairi Igarashi
Ryukoku University, Japan

OBJECTION, NEGATION, AND PARTICLES

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This paper concerns a class of English phrases that express objections to prior utterances and don't contain any overt negation. (Cf. Horn 1989)

- (1) a. "It was signed?" Markby interrupted sharply.
b. "Like hell it was! Of course it wasn't." (BNC)

They serve to make an objection to some part of their prior utterance and so affect the truth/ felicity of the utterance. There are other phrases that behave similarly.

- (2) a. [...A...]. ...A..., *my foot/hell/fiddlesticks*.
b. [...A...]. *Like hell(.)* ...A....

They behave like *No way*, *Nonsense*, *Of course not*, etc., and (3) are the descriptive observations of the phrases in (2).

- (3) a. [...A..., *my foot/hell/fiddlesticks*] behaves like a metalinguistic negation.
b. [*Like hell(.)* ...A....] behaves like a metalinguistic negation when separated from A, but it behaves like a descriptive negation when integrated into A.

Spenader and Maier (2009) call the phrases of this kind "*bullshit-operators*." I contend that we need to resurrect the quotation-operator (van der Sandt 1991) that they dispensed with, to allow us to specify the level of metarepresentation to come under *bullshit-operators*, and that any swearword, when appropriately accentuated, can function as a *bullshit-operator* if they have a metarepresentation under its scope.

References:

Horn, Laurence. 1989. *A Natural History of Negation*. U. Chicago Press.

Spenader, Jennifer, and Emar Maier. 2009. Contrast as denial in multi-dimensional semantics. *J. Pragmatics* 41.

van der Sandt, Rob. 1991. Denial. *CLS* 27.