Workshop 5: Information Structure in Scandinavian Languages

Topicalization of the VP-anaphor *det* in spoken Norwegian
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This paper investigates the information status of the topicalized anaphor *det* referring to higher order entities – clauses, VPs or type-NPs (henceforth VP-anaphor)[ex.1], based on the Norwegian spoken corpus NoTa. The VP-anaphor *det* has lately gained much attention in the Scandinavian literature. One reason is that as an object, the anaphor is found more often sentence-initially than in its regular object position (Rahkonen 2006, Mikkelsen 2012). The purpose of the paper is to identify what factors trigger topicalization of the VP-anaphor. Recent studies of the positioning of the VP-anaphor assume that the anaphor functions as a topic both in topicalized and regular object position, implying that topicality does not itself determine the placement of the anaphor. Anderssen and Bentzen (2012) claim that both in situ and topicalized VP-anaphors in Norwegian are aboutness topics. Mikkelsen (2009, 2012) claims that the anaphor is inherently topical, and suggests that the information status of the subject determines the placement of the anaphor rather than the information status of the anaphor itself.

I argue first, that topicality is a factor triggering topicalization. More specifically, I argue that the anaphor is topicalized because it is a topic with focus (Krifka 2007), derived from the focus of the sentence or utterance directly preceding it (*focus-chain*, Erteschik-Shir 2007). VP-anaphor in its regular object position on the other hand does not contain a focus component and may be derived from an already established topic.

Second, I argue that the cognitive status of the VP-anaphor’s referent also influences its positioning. Andréasson (2008) has already shown that object shift of the VP-anaphor in Swedish and Danish is sensitive to cognitive status; the referent needs to have the highest cognitive status (*in focus*, cf. Gundel et al. 1993) in order to be object shifted. I show that a difference between topicalized and in situ anaphors lies in whether the referent is *speaker-activated* or not: in situ *det* is *speaker-activated*, while topicalized *det* is not [ex. 2].

Third, I discuss the strong correlation between so-called *verum focus* (or *polarity focus*) and placement of the VP-anaphor [ex. 3]. Almost 50% of sentences with *det* in situ contain verum focus, while none of the sentences with topicalized *det* have verum focus. I will argue that the reason the VP-anaphor is not topicalized in verum focus sentences is that these sentences emphasize rather than comment on the propositional content referred to by *det*.

The study contributes to further understanding of the function of topicalization in V2 languages. In addition, it contributes to the understanding of the relation between word order and reference. The findings suggest that the placement, not only the form (e.g. choice of pronominal form and/or intonation) of the anaphor influences reference resolution.

[Ex. 1] *Topicalized anaphor det referring to clause, VP, and type NP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMB:</th>
<th><em>hvor bor du i dag?</em>?</th>
<th><strong>Det det</strong>, har du egentlig sagt.</th>
<th>(clause)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Where live you today</em></td>
<td><em>That</em> have you actually said</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Where do you live today? You’ve actually mentioned that already.”</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
005: skal vi [prate litt om reising], kanske?
   "Shall we talk a bit about travelling maybe"
   "Should we perhaps talk a bit about travelling?"

005: ja # det, kan vi gjøre.
   yes that can we do
   "Yes. We can do that."

004: det eneste jeg ikke liker er [karve],
   the only I not like is caraway
   "The only thing I don’t like is caraway."
   det, syns jeg smaker så vondt at (004)
   that think I taste so bad
   "I think that tastes so bad."

[Ex. 2] Activated versus speaker-activated referent
A: [Jeg har klippet meg],
   I have cut me
   "I have had a haircut"
B: Det har du!
   That have you
   "Indeed you have!"
B’:Du har det,
   You have that
   “You have.”

While the answer in B expresses that the information in A is new to the speaker, the answer in B’ implies that the information is already known (speaker-activated).

[Ex. 3] Verum focus and VP-anaphor in situ
(talking about state cash support for parents)

005: så [det går jo egentlig med til å finansiere alternativ barnepass], Jo men det GJØR det.
   "so, it’s all going to financing alternative child care. Yes, but it does actually."

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