

# Same but different: VP anaphors in Danish and English\*

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## 1 Verb Phrase Anaphora

- (1) CLAUSE 1 ... [antecedent VP] ... CLAUSE 2 ... *licensor* **anaphoric VP** ...

### VP pronominalization (VPP)

- (2) Sally wanted to [hit a home run], before Ingrid *did it*.
- (3) Jensen ville gerne [købe en ny traktor] inden Hansen *gjorde* **det**. [Danish]  
Jensen would willingly buy a new tractor before Hansen GØRE.PAST it  
*Jensen wanted to buy a new tractor before Hansen did (it).*

**Observation** Danish and English VPP are similar in form: V (*do/gøre* ~ 'make') + pronoun

**Goal of this talk** Show that despite the similarity of form Danish and English VPP differ in at least three ways (and to speculate as to why that might be).

## 2 Danish VPP ≠ English VPP

- i. In Danish VPP, *det* may front to clause-initial position:

- (4) Jensen [købte en ny traktor] og **det** *gjorde* Hansen også.  
Jensen bought a new tractor and it GØRE.PAST Hansen too  
*Jensen bought a new tractor and Hansen did (it) too.*

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\*This talk is based on joint work with Michael Houser, Ange Strom-Weber, and Maziar Toosarvandani on the Danish Verb Phrase Anaphora project (<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~danish/>). In the glosses DEF = definite and PRES = present. The licensor verb *gøre* is glossed as GØRE.TENSE.

In English VPP, *it* may not front:

- (5) \*Sally [hit a home run], and **it** Ingrid *did* too.
- (6) \*Sally [hit a home run], and **it** *did* Ingrid too.

ii. English VPP requires the antecedent VP to denote an action (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:284):

- (7) \*Harvey doesn't [know Otto], but Frank *does it*.
- (8) \*?Otto didn't [fall out the window], but Isaac *did it*.

Danish VPP does not:

- (9) Jensen [kender ikke Madsen], men **det** *gør* Hansen.  
Jensen knows not Madsen, but it GØRE.PRES Hansen  
*Jensen doesn't know Madsen, but Hansen does.*
- (10) Jensen [faldt ikke af traktoren] men **det** *gjorde* Hansen.  
Jensen fell not off tractor.DEF but it GØRE.PAST Hansen  
*Jensen didn't fall off the tractor, but Hansen did.*

iii. English VPP allows only *do* as the licensor:

- (11) \*Sally might [hit a home run] and Ingrid *might it* too.
- (12) \*Sally has [hit a home run] and Ingrid *has it* too.
- (13) \*Sally is [hitting a lot of home runs] and Ingrid *is it* too.

Danish VPP can be licensed by any auxiliary (modal, perfective, passive):

- (14) Jensen burde [købe en ny traktor] og **det** *burde* Hansen faktisk også.  
Jensen ought buy a new tractor and it ought Hansen actually also  
*Jensen should buy a new tractor and Hansen really should too.*
- (15) Jensen har [købt en ny traktor] og **det** *har* Hansen også.  
Jensen has bought a new tractor and it has Hansen also  
*Jensen has bought a new tractor and Hansen has too.*
- (16) Hveden blev [høstet uden problemer] og **det** *blev* majsens også.  
wheat.DEF became harvested without problems and it became corn.DEF also.  
*The wheat was harvested without any problems and the corn was too.*

**Summary** Danish VPP differs from English VPP in that i) the anaphoric pronoun may front, ii) it places no restrictions on its antecedent, and iii) it can be licensed by any auxiliary.

### 3 Why?

#### 3.1 Piece by piece

##### i. Fronting

- other uses *it* also do not allow fronting:

- (17) a. Sally hit a home run and everyone knows **it**.  
b. \*Sally hit a home run and **it** everyone knows.

- other uses of *det*, do:

- (18) a. Jensen har købt en ny traktor og alle naboerne ved **det**.  
Jensen has bought a new tractor and all neighbors.DEF know it  
*Jensen has bought a new tractor and all the neighbors know it.*  
b. Jensen har købt en ny traktor og **det** ved alle naboerne.  
Jensen has bought a new tractor and it know all neighbors.DEF

##### ii. Restrictions on antecedent

- Kehler and Ward (2004:398): VPP *do* = transitive main verb *do* → *it* must specify an event → antecedent of *it* must denote an event
- Houser et al. (2006): VPP *gøre* = dummy verb → no requirements on referent of *det* → no requirement on antecedent of *det*

##### iii. Restrictions on licensor

- VPP *it* is a DP (Kehler and Ward 2004), and English auxiliaries do not take DP complements; they take VP complements
- VPP *det* is not a DP, but a VP, and hence compatible with all auxiliaries; OR
- VPP *det* is a DP, but Danish auxiliaries can take DP complements

#### 3.2 The bigger picture

- VPP is the general purpose, unmarked VP anaphor in Danish: it can be used with all antecedents and all licensors.
- In English, the general purpose VP anaphor is VP ellipsis (VPE):

- (19) Robert [left the field], before Harvey *did* \_\_\_\_.

##### ii. No restrictions on antecedent

- (20) Harvey doesn't [know Otto], but Frank *does* \_\_\_\_.

- (21) Otto didn't [fall out the window], but Isaac *did* \_\_\_\_.

iii. All auxiliaries can license VPE:

(22) Sally might [hit a home run] and Ingrid *might* \_\_\_\_ too.

(23) Sally has [hit a home run] and Ingrid *has* \_\_\_\_ too.

(24) Sally is [hitting a lot of home runs] and Ingrid *is* \_\_\_\_ too.

**Upshot** Danish VPP looks like English VPP, but behaves like English VPE in being the general purpose VP anaphor.

## Why?

- Danish is a verb second (V2) language:

[CP    XP            finite-verb    [TP subject ... ] ]

- VPP “fits” V2:

[CP    **anaphor**    *licensor*    [TP subject ... ] ]

(25)    ... og    [CP    **det**            *burde*            [TP Hansen faktisk også ] ].  
          and            it            ought            Hansen actually also  
          ... *and Hansen really should too.*

- VPE is no good for V2, because XP must be overt
- English is not a V2 language

**Conclusion** VPP in Danish and English: same form but different function.

## References

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