Same but different: VP anaphors in Danish and English*

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1 Verb Phrase Anaphora

(1) \textsc{clause 1} \ldots [antecedent VP] \ldots \textsc{clause 2} \ldots licensor anaphoric VP \ldots

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 \textsc{gøre.past it}

\textit{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, \textit{det} may front to clause-initial position:

(4) Jensen [købte en ny traktor] og \textit{det} gjorde Hansen også.
Jensen bought a new tractor and it \textsc{gøre.past Hansen too}

\textit{Jensen bought a new tractor and Hansen did (it) too.}

*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 \textsc{def} = definite and \textsc{pres} = present. The licensor verb \textit{gøre} is glossed as \textsc{gøre.tense}. 

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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.
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.
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:

      *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.*

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 ___ ___ 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:

  \[ \text{[CP} \ \text{XP} \ \text{finite-verb} \ \text{[TP subject . . . ]]} \]

• VPP “fits” V2:

  \[ \text{[CP} \ \text{anaphor} \ \text{licensor} \ \text{[TP subject . . . ]]} \]

  (25) . . . og \ [\text{CP} \ \text{det} \ \text{burde} \ \text{[TP Hansen faktisk også ]}].

  \( \ldots \text{and} \ \text{Hansen really should too.} \)

• 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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