Verb Phrase Anaphora in Danish: Deep or Surface?

Michael J. Houser, Line Mikkelsen, Ange Strom-Weber, Maziar Toosarvandani

University of California, Berkeley

Deep anaphors

Do it anaphora.
(1) Sally ate a durian but Mike couldn’t do it.
Null Complement anaphora.
(2) I asked Bill to leave but he refused. (Also, none anaphora.)

VPA as Deep Anaphora

✓ det is overt; there are no uncontroversial instances of an overt surface anaphor.
✓ No internal argument A-extraction. This follows if det is atomic.

(7) * Jeg ved hvem Susan kildede, men jeg ved ikke hvem Palle gjorde det.
   I know who Susan tickled, but I don’t know who Palle did. 
   Intended: ‘I know who Susan tickled but I don’t know to whom Palle did.’
⇒ What about the subjects of unaccusative and passive verbs, e.g. (8-9)?

(8) Bare det ville bryde sammen lige nu! Men det gjorde det selvfølgelig ikke!
   just it would break together right now but det did it of course not
   ⇒ If only the train would break down right now! But of course it didn’t!

(9) Det var første gang, jeg ønskede at blive afsat, og det blev jeg.
   It was first time I wanted to become dismissed and det became I
   ⇒ It was the first time I had wanted to be dismissed and I was.

⇒ Maintaining a deep anaphora analysis for det requires us to make nonstandard assumptions about where these subjects originate.
⇒ All subjects including passive and unaccusative subjects must originate in Spec-TP.
⇒ This entails abandoning the UTAH, since arguments with different thematic roles would originate in the same structural position.

Surface anaphors

(3) José likes pears and Holly does [like pears] too.
Sluicing.
(4) Ann saw somebody but I don’t know who [Ann saw].
(Also, NP-Ellipsis.)

VPA as Surface Anaphora

✓ VPA exhibits the Missing Antecedent Phenomenon.

(10) Jeg har aldrig redet på en kamel, men det har Ivan og han siger at den stank forfærdeligt.
   I have never ridden on a camel but det has Ivan and he says it stank terribly
   ⇒ ‘I have never ridden a camel, but Ivan has and he says it stank terribly.’

⇒ VPA strongly prefers a linguistic antecedent.

(11) [A and B are observing C struggling to swim in a pool]
   A: # Det kan jeg heller ikke.
   DET can I either not
   Intended: ‘I can’t swim either.’

⇒ VPA requires parallelism in transitivity between the target and antecedent clauses.

(12) * Jeg ville hænge hesteskoen over døren og det gør den nu.
   I wanted hang horseshoe-the over door-the and det does it now
   ⇒ ‘I wanted to hang the horseshoe over the door and it hangs there now.’

⇒ If det is a surface anaphor, we expect A-extraction out of it to be good (Schuyler 2001) but it isn’t, e.g. (7). This suggests that det is a deep anaphor.
⇒ The analysis of det as surface anaphora can be saved if we attribute the ungrammaticality of (7) to a violation of locality.
⇒ Assuming that VP is topic-marked since it is given (cf. Merchant 2001), it is eligible for movement to Spec-CP, e.g. (6), as is the wh-word hvem.
⇒ By locality (in the sense of Epstein et al. 1998), VP will be closer to C than any discourse element contained within it.

Conclusion

Despite appearances, det is a surface anaphor.