

# Predicate *that*-anaphora in English and beyond\*

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## 1 Introduction

Various Germanic languages can use a demonstrative pronoun, parallel to ‘that’, as a form of verbal anaphora in construction with a modal or auxiliary verb.

- (1) Jan løser problemet, Kari { kan / må / bør / gjør } ikke **det**.  
Jan solves problem-DEF Kari can must should does not DET  
‘Jan solves the problem, Kari can’t/mustn’t/shouldn’t/doesn’t.’  
[Norwegian, Bentzen et al. 2013]
- (2) Kann Anna das Problem lösen? — Nein, **das** kann sie nicht.  
can Anna the problem solve no that can she not  
‘Can Anne solve the problem? – No, she can’t.’  
[German, López & Winkler 2000]
- (3) Tasman kon niet zwemmen maar Cook kon **dat** weel.  
Tasman could not swim but Cook could that well  
‘Tasman couldn’t swim but Cook could.’  
[Dutch, Zwart 2011:128]

- A lot of attention has been paid to these forms in (mainland) Scandinavian languages (Lødrup 1994, 2012, Houser et al. 2007, Bentzen et al. 2013, Mikkelsen 2015 a.o.)
- Less attention paid to English. As the translations above indicate, the most natural correspondent to Scandinavian *det* is verb phrase ellipsis.

- But predicate *that*-anaphora does exist in (at least some varieties of) English!

- (4) A: John can make curry really well./Can John make curry really well?  
B: That he can. [many Englishes]
- (5) A: Did John make a mistake?  
B: That he might (have (%done)). [many Englishes, ‘BrE *do*’]
- (6) A: John will be angry.  
B: That he will (be). [many Englishes]
- (7) Bill always wanted to become a teacher/rich and famous/the richest man in the world...  
?... and that he became. [many Englishes]
- It seems to be necessary to front the *that*.
  - Examples with nominal or adjectival predicates (8) are at best awkward if *that* is in situ, and – in most Englishes – examples with verbal predicates (9) are flat ungrammatical if *that* is in situ.
- (8) a. John will be angry. – ??He will be that.  
b. Bill always wanted to become a teacher, ??and he became that.
- (9) a. John can make curry really well. – \*He can that.  
b. Did John make a mistake? – \*He might (have) that. [most Englishes]

\*This research stretches back to a 2012 LAGB presentation, more recently supplemented by a 2016 CGSW presentation. Thanks to audiences at both those venues, plus Anne Dahl, Terje Lohndal, and Astrid Rasch for judgements. Comments very welcome at [andrew.weir@ntnu.no](mailto:andrew.weir@ntnu.no).

- This seems to have an interesting correlate in the behavior of Danish (but not Norwegian) predicate *det* reported by Mikkelsen 2015.
  - First approximation (inaccurate but OK for now): if there is no other information-structurally distinguished constituent that is a candidate for fronting, then *det* must.
- (10) “Lad os gå en tur,” sagde Klump, “så sker der nok noget let us go a walk said Klump then happens EXPL probably something spændende.”  
exciting  
““Let’s go for a walk,” said Klump, “then probably something exciting will happen.””
- a. \*Der plejer jo at gøre det.  
EXPL tends indeed to do DET
- b. Det<sub>i</sub> plejer der jo at gøre t<sub>j</sub>.  
DET tends EXPL indeed to do  
‘That tends to happen.’ (lit. ‘There tends to (do that).’)  
[Danish, Mikkelsen 2015:ex. (47)]
- But in Norwegian, *det* seems to be able to remain in situ without problems, viz. the attested example in (11):
- (11) Jeg tar høyde for at det sikkert vil dukke opp problemer av et eller annet  
I assume that there surely will pop up problems of one or another  
slag, det pleier å gjøre det.  
sort there tends to do DET.  
‘I assume that there will arise problems of one kind or another. There tends to.’ (<http://www.oblad.no/ski/til-verdensfinalen-i-gokart/s/2-2.2610-1.3859922>) [Norw.]
- And in some varieties of English – mostly Scottish, it appears – *that* can appear after an auxiliary, under certain circumstances.
- (12) Dictionary of the Scots Language (DSL, [www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk)) entry for *that*:  
“used instead of repeating a previous word or phrase in giving emphasis to what has already been said, *so, indeed, just as you say*. Also in colloq. Eng., *obsol.*”
- (13) A: Can John make curry really well!  
B: He can that! [(some) ScotEng]
- (14) a. “He hutt me!” repeated Jeanie. “He did **that!**” cried her girl guardian.  
[DSL, originally from 1931 text *Herrin’ Jenny*]  
b. “Have you ever been on the north side of the bridge?” “I have **that.**”  
[DSL, originally from newspaper *St Andrews Citizen*, 1940]  
c. But ah’d ey speak tae Jinty, aw aye, ah wid **that**, but she hus tae speak tae me first but.  
[Irvine Welsh, *A Decent Ride*, 2015]  
d. You could make quite a crumble with that giant rhubarb ;) — Aye you could **that.**  
[found on blog comments thread from 2008<sup>1</sup>]
- As the above dictionary definition implies, while ‘normal’ (fronting) *that* can express disagreement, this Scottish in-situ *that* cannot:
- (15) Can John make curry well?  
a. That he can’t.  
b. #No, he can’t that. [ScotEng]
- A distinctive characteristic of non-fronted *that* in these dialects: it requires heavy stress (on both the *that* and the auxiliary)
- (16) Can John make curry really well?  
a. He CAN THAT.  
b. \*He CAN that.
- ... which again contrasts with both VPE and fronting *that*, where stress is only on the aux:
- (17) a. He CAN.  
b. That he CAN.
- Central question: what governs the fronting or non-fronting behavior of *that/det*?
  - ... and the slightly different pragmatic behavior/discourse conditions on their use?
  - What accounts for the cross-linguistic differences?

<sup>1</sup><http://stepsback.blogspot.com/2008/06/isle-of-arran.html>

Roadmap:

- Preliminaries: *det/that* as surface anaphora
- Accounting for the movement patterns across languages
- The Scottish English non-movement pattern

## 2 *det* and *that* as verb phrase pronominalization

### 2.1 Preliminaries: deep and surface anaphora

One thing to pin down at the start is that there are a number of different *thats* and *dets* which complicate the picture.

- It might be tempting to reduce the English *that* under investigation here to ‘do that’, perhaps plus ellipsis, e.g.:
- (18) a. Can John make curry really well? – That<sub>i</sub> he can ~~do~~ t<sub>i</sub>.  
b. Might John have destroyed the evidence? – That he might ~~have done~~ t<sub>i</sub>
- But this is not what’s going on.
  - *do that* can only take eventive antecedents (19a), and absolutely does not allow expletive subjects (19b), but this is not a restriction shared by fronting *that* (20).
- (19) a. Might John know the answer? – ?\*He might do that.  
b. Might there arise problems? – \*There might do that.
- (20) a. Might John know the answer? – That he might.  
b. Might there arise problems? – That there might.
- It is possible (at least in my dialect) to insert a form of *do* in examples like (20):
- (21) a. Might John know the answer? – That he might do.  
b. Might there arise problems? – ?That there might do.  
c. Have there arisen problems? – ?That there might have done.

- But this is not the ‘agentive/main-verb’ *do* of *do that* but rather a separate, mysterious phenomenon, ‘British *do*’ (Baker 1984, Haddican 2007, Aelbrecht 2010, Baltin 2012 a.o.), which occurs with VP ellipsis and VP fronting too:

- (22) a. Might John know the answer? – He might do.  
b. Might there arise problems? – There might do.  
c. Have there arisen problems? – ?There might have done. [BrE]
- (23) Know the answer, he might do. [BrE]

- It is maybe even easier to get led up a similar garden path in Norwegian, because certain (root) modals look like they can take nominal arguments, at least of a restricted type (cf. discussion in Lødrup 1994), and a meaning rather like English ‘do that’ results:

- (24) Skal/vil du noe spennende i kveld?  
shall/will you something exciting this evening  
‘Will you/do you want to do something exciting this evening?’
- (25) Dette kan/vil/skal/må/bør/tør jeg ikke.  
This can/will/shall/must/should/dare I not  
‘I can’t / don’t want to / won’t / mustn’t / shouldn’t / daren’t do this.’ (Lødrup 1994:ex. (10))

As Lødrup 1994, 2012 and Bentzen et al. 2013 discuss (and see also Houser et al. 2007), there are *two* kinds of predicate anaphor *det* in Norwegian:

- the above kind, parallel to English ‘do that’, which is **deep anaphora** in Hankamer & Sag 1976’s terms
- and a **surface anaphor** *det*, parallel to English VP ellipsis

Lødrup 1994, Bentzen et al. 2013: deep-anaphoric *det* undergoes object shift (i.e. appears to the left of adverbs like *ikke* in main clauses with a single verb), surface-anaphoric *det* does not:

- (26) a. Jeg kan det ikke.  
 I can DET not  
 'I can't do that.'  
 b. Jeg kan ikke det.  
 I can not DET  
 'I can't.'

Deep-anaphoric *det* can find its antecedent in the non-linguistic context, but surface-anaphoric *det* cannot:

- (27) (Bentzen et al. 2013:106)  
 Watching John pretending to break our new expensive vase:  
 a. Slapp av, han gjør det ikke.  
 relax he does DET not  
 'Relax, he won't do it.'  
 b. #Slapp av, han gjør ikke det.  
 relax he does not DET  
 (cf. English ?#Relax, he won't in similar contexts<sup>2</sup>)

**Aside:** we see *gjøre* in (27), which plays a role similar to English *do*-support (Houser et al. 2011, Platzack 2012)...

- (28) Kari går ofte på kino. John gjør ikke det.  
 Kari goes often on cinema John does not DET  
 'Kari often goes to the cinema. John doesn't.' (Bentzen et al. 2013:108)

... and appears to also play a similar sort of role to 'British *do*' in examples like the following:<sup>3</sup>

- (29) Jeg vet ikke om Kari kjenner Joakim, men Jens må gjøre det.  
 I know not if Kari knows Joakim but Jens must do DET  
 'I don't know if Kari knows Joakim, but Jens must (%do).' (Bentzen et al. 2013:100)

I have nothing to say about how or why *dolgjøre*-support arises in these contexts, so am just going to take them for granted in what I have to say.

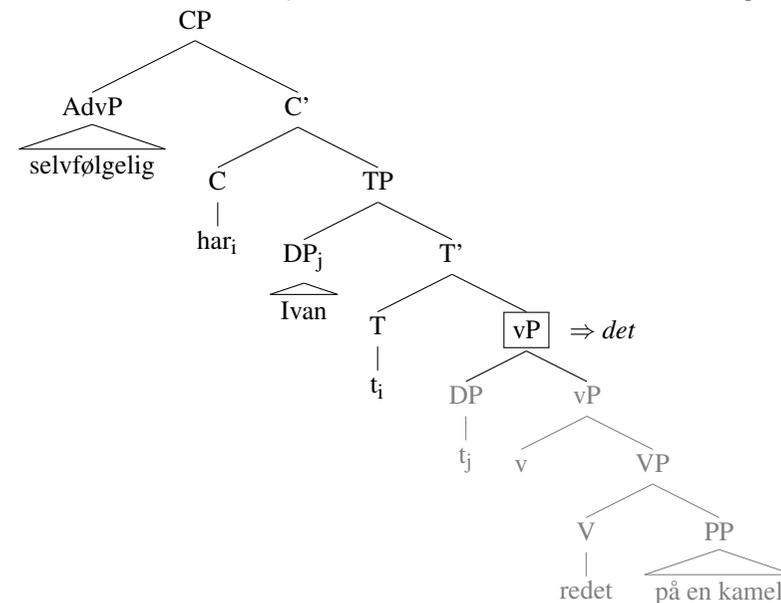
## 2.2 Analysis

Houser et al. 2007, Bentzen et al. 2013:

- deep-anaphoric *det* is a 'real' pronoun, a nominal argument: there is no verb phrase present in the structure as the complement of the modal. (Qua nominal argument, it undergoes object shift.)
- surface-anaphoric *det* is an elliptical form of the whole verb phrase, which is underlyingly present but gets pronounced as *det*.

Houser et al. 2007: the verb phrase is 'overwritten' by *det*:

- (30) a. Jeg har aldrig redet på en kamel, men selvfølgelig har Ivan det.  
 I have never ridden on a camel but of.course has Ivan DET  
 'I have never ridden a camel, but of course Ivan has.' [Danish]  
 b.

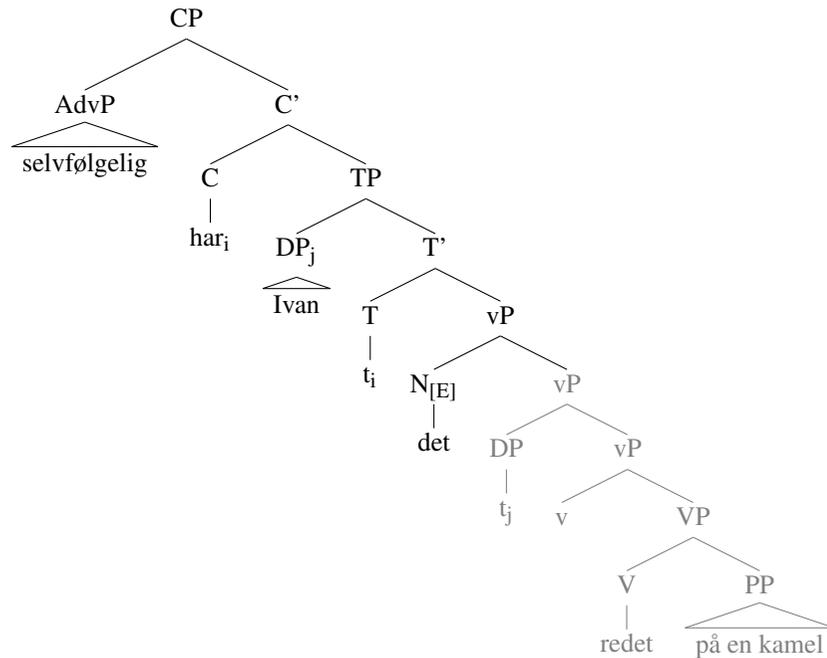


<sup>2</sup>Though matters aren't as clear-cut for English VP ellipsis as Hankamer & Sag 1976 claimed, see e.g. Miller & Pullum 2013.

<sup>3</sup>As Bentzen et al. 2013 point out, this must be surface-anaphoric *det* because of the non-eventive antecedent, cf. English ?#I don't know if Kari knows Joakim, but Jens must do that.

Bentzen et al. 2013: *det* is a nominal head that adjoins to a vP and licenses its ellipsis:

(31)



- I am going to remain agnostic between these two analyses, but agree with both of them that (surface-anaphoric) *det* is concealing linguistic structure.
- That seems to be necessary, for example, to capture cases where the subject has clearly raised to a derived subject position, e.g:

(32) Kan bussen ha kommet nå? – Nei, den kan ikke det.  
 can bus-the have come now no it can not DET  
 ‘Might the bus have arrived? – No, it can’t have.’ [Norwegian, Lødrup 1994:304]

- *Den* (=‘it’, the bus) is not an argument of the epistemic modal *kan*, which takes scope over the whole proposition, but rather of *komme*.
- If *det* was a ‘blob’ without internal structure, it’s not clear where *den* could have originated.

- But if *det* conceals underlying structure, then *den* can be generated as an argument of *komme* and raise to subject position:

(33) den<sub>i</sub> kan ikke det [~~ha kommet t<sub>i</sub> nå~~]

The English *that* which we are interested in is surface anaphora:

- It requires an overt linguistic antecedent:

(34) (Watching someone do a double backflip into a pool)  
 #That I definitely can’t.

- It licenses ‘missing antecedents’ (Grinder & Postal 1971, cf. Houser et al. 2007, Bentzen et al. 2013):

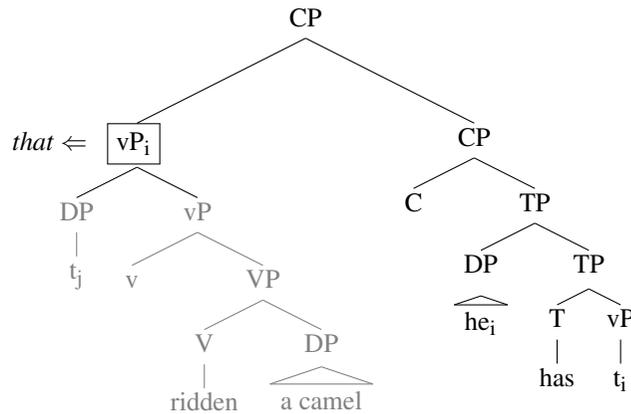
(35) Has John ever ridden a camel? – That he has, and it stank.

- It allows for cases where the arguments must either originate in, or still be present in, underlying structure.

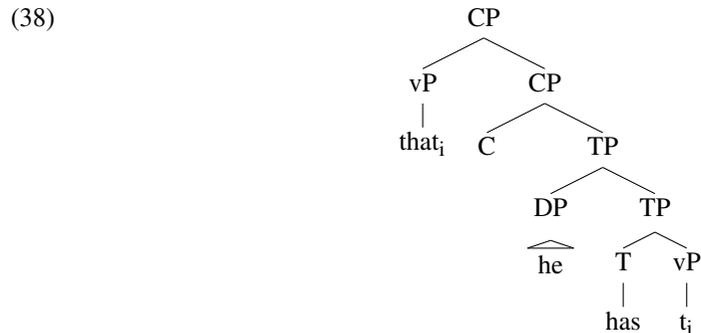
(36) a. Might the bus have arrived early? – That it might.  
 b. Might there arise problems? – That there might.  
 i.e. *there might arise problems*, cf. \**There might do that* on ‘agentive’ reading of *do that*  
 c. Have there arisen problems? – That there have. (verb agrees with *problems*)

So I assume that English *that*, also, conceals linguistic structure:

- (37) a. Has John ever ridden a camel? – That he has.  
 b.



Having made that assumption, I am henceforth going to abbreviate and not actually show the internal structure of *that/det* anaphora:



### 3 Movement and [th]-features

#### 3.1 Fronting across languages

Back to the mystery: why do we get differences in fronting behavior across languages?

- (39) Danish: fronting obligatory (in the below context)
- \*Der plejer jo at gøre det.  
 there tends indeed to do DET
  - Det<sub>i</sub> plejer der jo at gøre t<sub>i</sub>.  
 DET tends there indeed to do  
 ‘There tends to.’
- (40) Norwegian: fronting optional
- Det pleier jo å gjøre det.  
 there tends indeed to do DET
  - Det<sub>i</sub> pleier det jo å gjøre t<sub>i</sub>.  
 DET tends there indeed to do  
 ‘There tends to.’
- (41) English (apart from some Scottish varieties, which we’ll come back to): fronting obligatory
- Will there arise problems?
    - That there will.
    - \*There will that.
  - A: John is angry about the lazy suppliers’ excuses.
    - B: That, he often is.
    - B: ??He often is that./??He is often that.
  - A: John wanted to become the richest man in the world. . .
    - B: . . . and that he became.
    - B: . . . ??and he became that.

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**Aside on the contrast between ‘\*’ and ‘??’ above:** in the cases where *that* replaces a predicative adjective or nominal, ‘*that*-in-situ’ (41b, c) is degraded but much better than when *that* replaces a verb phrase (41a).

- I suggest that in the ‘??’ cases, *that* in (40) can marginally be interpreted as a referential expression:

- to an individual in (41c), cf. (42a),
- and to something like a ‘trope’ ( $\approx$  entity-instantiation of a property, cf. (42b), Moltmann 2013 et passim.) in (41b)

- (42) a. ?(?)John wanted to become the richest man in the world, and he became that person.  
b. John is angry. That (=being angry) is an awful thing to be.

- They would in this case *not* be surface anaphora, but rather deep anaphors. Such cases are – perhaps – not very natural in predicative position, hence the ‘??’ in (41b, c).
- No such alternative is even marginally available for the verb phrase in (41a), which is fully ‘\*’.
- In (43), *that*-in-situ again becomes much worse<sup>4</sup>, because ‘problems’ cannot sensibly be replaced with ‘truly nominal’ *that*:

- (43) I said there would be problems...  
a. and that there were.  
b. ?\*and there were that.

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### 3.2 Mikkelsen 2015

**Starting point:** Mikkelsen 2015’s analysis for Danish.

- There are various contexts in which *det* does not have to front.

- Rough slogan (mine not Mikkelsen’s): ‘if it can’t then it doesn’t’, i.e. no fronting if something else occupies [Spec, CP], or if nothing can occupy [Spec, CP], e.g. in polar questions:

- (44) a. Har han det?  
has he DET  
‘Has he?’  
b. Selvfølgelig har han det.  
of course has he DET  
‘Of course he has.’

Or if there is an information-structurally distinguished subject:

- (45) En del af dem klarer sig, andre gør det ikke.  
a part of them manage REFL others do DET not  
‘Some of them make it, others don’t.’ (Mikkelsen 2015:ex. 15)

But not if the subject is an expletive, or given in the context:

- (46) a. \*Der plejer jo at gøre det.  
there tends indeed to do DET  
b. Bush sagde nej. Det gør han ofte. / #Han gør (det) ofte (det).  
Bush said no DET does he often he does DET often DET  
‘Bush said no. He often does (that).’ (Mikkelsen 2015:ex. 36)

Mikkelsen’s proposal:

- *det* bears an uninterpretable, weak, [C] feature, which must be checked under Agree with a C head.
- Root V2 clauses with expletive/non-distinguished subjects are TPs (not CPs).

The cases in (46) fail because there is no C in the structure (the embedded clause in (46a) is a non-finite TP), and so *det* is unlicensed:

- (47) [<sub>TP</sub> Der plejer jo [<sub>TP</sub> at gøre det]<sub>[uC]</sub>]

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<sup>4</sup>Except that speakers of dialects like mine can rescue it by giving it the particular prosody I mentioned earlier: *and there WERE THAT!* I think (43b) is ungrammatical for everyone if *that* is distressed.

C can be projected, and it will probe and check the feature on *det* – while simultaneously attracting it:

(48) [CP Det<sub>i,[thC]</sub> [C plejer<sub>j</sub>] [TP der t<sub>j</sub> jo [TP at gøre t<sub>i</sub>]]]

In the case where CP is projected, but something else occupies [Spec, CP], the [C] feature on the complementizer can Agree with and check the [C] feature on *det* at a distance:

(49) [CP Selvfølgelig [C kan<sub>i</sub>] [TP han t<sub>i</sub> det<sub>[thC]</sub>]]

In support of this, Mikkelsen points to the grammaticality of cases like (50), whether *det* has fronted or not.

(50) Hossein ligner overhovedet ikke en mand, der har behov for at drage til  
 Hossein resembles at all not a man who has need for to go to  
 Christiania som kurer for at klare sig.  
 Christiania as courier for to manage REFL  
 ‘Hossein doesn’t at all look like someone who needs to go to Christiania as a courier to make a living.’

- a. Der må være en anden grund til, [CP **at** han gør **det**].  
 there must be an other reason to that he does DET  
 ‘There must be some other reason for him to do it.’
- b. **Det<sub>i</sub>** må der være en anden grund til, [CP **at** han gør t<sub>i</sub>].  
 DET must there be an other reason to that he does  
 ‘There must be some other reason for him to do it.’ (Mikkelsen 2015:ex. 48)

- (50a) is grammatical – despite *det* having the option to front (50b) but not doing so...
- ...because there is an *intermediate* complementizer (bolded), which introduces the embedded clause, and which can license *det* in situ.<sup>5</sup>

This analysis nicely captures the mysterious ungrammaticality of cases like (46a), and the contrast with cases like (50a).

- But, as Mikkelsen acknowledges, it raises a mystery of its own: why would *det* have ‘a [C] feature’? What is a [C] feature anyway (when it’s on *det*)?

### 3.3 [th]-features

I propose to extend the analysis so that it captures the English facts, and might have an answer to the above question.

- I maintain the core insight that there is a link between the clausal left periphery and the licensing of predicate *that*-anaphora.
- Predicate *that*-anaphora do bear certain formal features, which can interact with heads in the left periphery (and might need to be checked by them).
- I suggest that there is a parallel between predicate *that*-anaphora and *wh*-words.
- Consider the below paradigm for *wh*-words in English:

- (51) a. What kind of matériel do béavers use to build dams?  
 b. \*Béavers use what kind of matériel to build dams?  
 c. Béavers use WHAT kind of material to build dams?! [echo question]  
 d. Béavers use *whát* kind of matériel to build dams? [‘quiz show’ question]

- The [wh]-features on *what kind of material* can be (and usually are) checked by movement to [Spec, CP].
- But they can also be checked in situ if they receive heavy stress/are in focus.

Now consider the below paradigm for predicate *that* in English (NB not vP-replacing *that*, which we’ll come back to):

- (52) John wanted to become the richest man in the world...  
 a. ... and that he became.  
 b. ??... and he became that.  
 c. ... and he became just *thát*/exactly *thát*.

- (53) I said there would be problems...  
 a. ... and that there were.  
 b. ?\*... and there were that.  
 c. ... and there were just/exactly *thát*.

The addition of the focus adverbs *just/exactly*, combined with stress on *that*, improves in-situ *that* considerably.

<sup>5</sup>Topicalization to the Spec of the intermediate CP is (independently) ungrammatical: \**Der må være en anden grund til det<sub>i</sub> at han gør t<sub>i</sub>*.

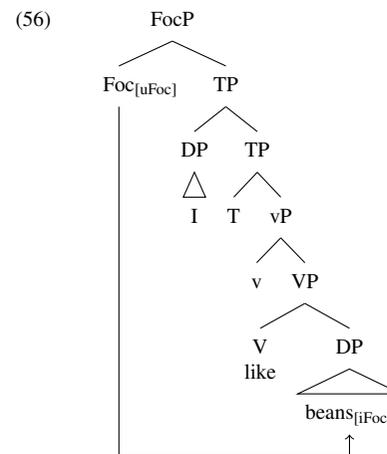
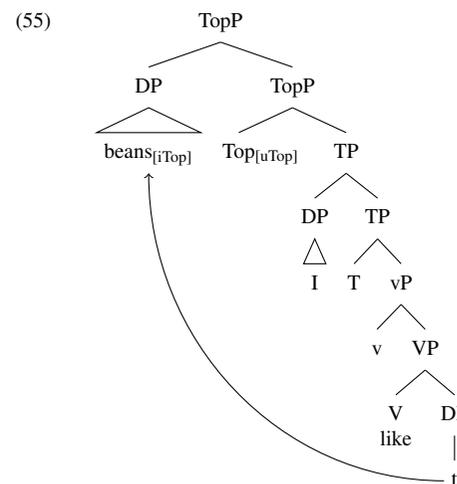
- Suppose, then, that there is some commonality between *wh*-words and predicate *that*-anaphora.
- We might talk of ‘wh-features’ on *wh*-words and ‘th-features’ on predicate *that*-anaphora.<sup>6</sup>
- That is, both *wh*-words (in English) and predicate *that*-anaphora bear uninterpretable features.
- These features will need to be checked by some head in the left periphery endowed by interpretable versions of those features.
- But those left-peripheral heads will themselves need to have some uninterpretable feature to prompt probing, which will need to be matched by an interpretable feature on *wh*-words or *that* respectively.
- For *wh*-words, this can be [Q] (or Rel), or perhaps [Focus]: for *th*-words, this will be some discourse feature like [Topic] or [Focus].

Probing and checking by these heads will have whatever the ‘normal’ effect of those heads is.

- In English, quite in general, topics can front, but foci don’t.<sup>7</sup>

- (54) a. Beans I like, but broccoli I hate. ((contrastive) topic)  
 b. What do you like? – I like BEANS. / \*BEANS I like.

We could say, then, that probing by [uTopic] results in fronting (we could say these features are ‘strong’ or are paired with an EPP feature); for [uFocus], there is no movement, but stress is realized in situ.



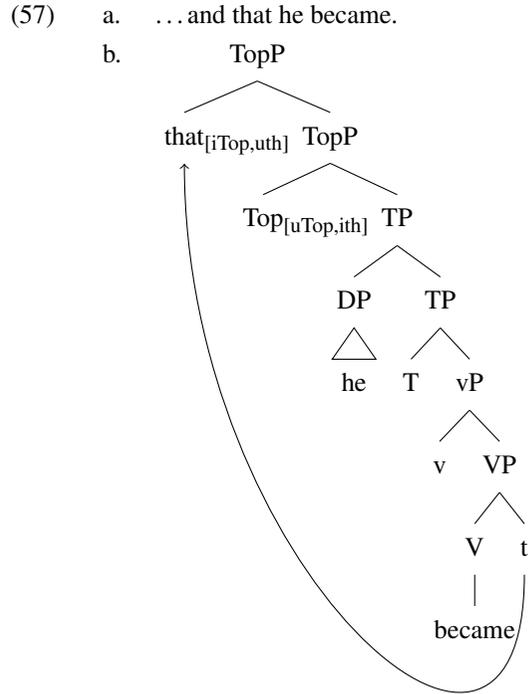
<sup>6</sup> Note that the name ‘th-features’ shouldn’t be taken to mean that *all* demonstratives with a ‘th’-onset bear these features. ‘Normal’ demonstratives don’t show any of the obligatory fronting etc. behavior under discussion here (e.g. *I’ve never seen that man before*).

Note also in passing that the claim that *det/that* bear [th]-features might be more compatible with Bentzen et al. 2013’s ‘adjunction’ analysis for *det* than Houser et al. 2007’s ‘overwriting’ analysis: on the latter analysis, a vP that gets spelled out as *det* would have to somehow ‘acquire’ a [th]-feature at the vP level, violating the Inclusiveness condition, while on the former analysis, the [th]-feature could be borne by the adjoining *det*.

<sup>7</sup>Modulo so-called ‘Yiddish-movement’ (Prince 1981), and some cases involving degree words: *Three hundred kroner this cost me*.

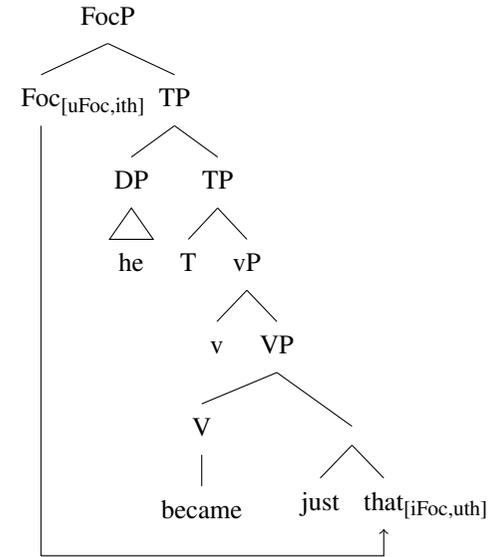
This can then be carried over to the case of predicate *that*-anaphora. Because these have an uninterpretable [th]-feature, they need to be probed by some left-peripheral head – suppose that this could be either Top or Foc.

If it's Top, then fronting results:



If it's Foc (most easily brought out by a word like *just/exactly*), then in-situ stress results:

- (58) a. ... and he became just that.  
 b.



But there can't be *no* left-peripheral head that probes for *that*, as otherwise the [th]-feature will go unchecked. Hence the ungrammaticality of (59):

- (59) a. He said he would be angry, ??and he IS that.  
 b. I said there would be problems, ?\*and there WERE that.

### 3.4 Accounting for differences between languages

This perspective lets us capture how Norwegian, Danish, and English differ with respect to predicate *that*-anaphora and movement.

#### Norwegian: a *th*-in-situ language

- We can suppose either that the [th]-feature is generated interpretable on Norwegian *det*, or it's simply not there at all.
- In either case, it won't enter into syntactic relations, and therefore does not prompt movement of its own accord, cf. the grammaticality of (60) (though of course *det* can be fronted for other reasons, e.g. if it's a topic).

(60) Det pleier å gjøre det.  
 there tends to do DET  
 'There tends to.' [Norw.]

#### Danish: liberal left-peripheral licensors

- In Danish, we can say that *det* bears uninterpretable [th]-features, and that these therefore have to be checked by a left-peripheral head;
- but perhaps C (or some other left-peripheral head) is always endowed with interpretable [th]-features in Danish, plus some other uninterpretable discourse feature that can probe and be checked by some corresponding interpretable feature on *det*, e.g. [anaphoric topic] (which is what Mikkelsen proposes).
- In the absence of anything else moving to [Spec, CP], *det* will be probed and will have to front;
- but if something else occupies [Spec, CP], or if movement to the left periphery is otherwise ruled out, C can probe and license *det* in situ, as in Mikkelsen's analysis.
- Either simply no root CP and subject-initial root clauses are bare TPs (Mikkelsen), or C has to be merged with [th]-features to probe (and therefore attract) *det*.

(61) a. \*Der plejer jo [TP at gjøre det<sub>[thC]i]</sub>.  
 there tends indeed to do DET  
 b. [CP Det<sub>i,[thC]i</sub> [C plejer<sub>j</sub>] [TP der t<sub>j</sub> jo [TP at gjøre t<sub>i</sub>]]]

In embedded contexts, C can be endowed with [th]-features and can probe and check them on *det*, but won't attract *det* (i.e. whatever it is that rules out embedded topicalization in general in embedded contexts like (62), is also allowing for *det* to be licensed in situ):

(62) Der må være en anden grund til, [CP at han gjør det].  
 there must be an other reason to that he does DET  
 'There must be some other reason for him to do it.'

Q-marked Cs have to be assumed to be able to bear [th]-features too, to rule in examples like (63):

(63) Kan han det?  
 can he DET  
 'Can he?'

#### English: restricted left-peripheral licensors

- In English, predicate *that* bears uninterpretable [th]-features, so something from the left periphery will need to probe to check them.
- We can suppose that perhaps only Topic and Focus are endowed with such features in English.
- If Topic probes, then *that* will front: if Focus probes, then *that* will be realized in situ with heavy stress, as above.
- Q-marked C does not bear such features, ruling out (64):

(64) A: John will get really angry.  
 B: \*Will he that?

#### 4 On vP-fronting and (Verum) Focus

Under *that*-fronting, the auxiliary or polarity has to be stressed, and the subject can't differ from the antecedent:<sup>8</sup>

(65) Can John make curry really well? – No, that he CAN'T.

(66) John can make curry really well, \*and that Mary can, too.

This is a general fact about predicate/VP fronting, though:

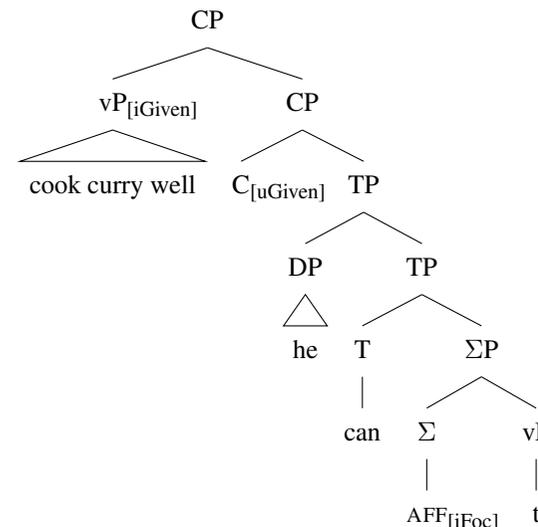
- (67) a. I thought that John could make curry well, but make curry well he decidedly CANNOT.  
 b. John can't make curry well, \*but make curry well Mary can.

Whatever enforces this in the general case for predicate fronting, enforces it for *that*-fronting as well.

A proposal loosely based on (and misrepresenting) Samko 2016:

- Predicate fronting is the result of a left-peripheral head probing for a [Given] feature, i.e. the vP must be discourse-old (Given in the sense of e.g. Schwarzschild 1999).<sup>9</sup>
- The subject moves out of this Given vP to [Spec, TP], and then the Given vP fronts. Note that polarity is located in a ΣP (Laka 1990 and much subsequent work), below TP.

- (68) a. Cook curry well, he can.  
 b.



Something needs to be focused in any sentence, though. It's an infelicitous discourse move to utter a sentence which is literally completely Given, with no focus – that is, to simply repeat back what your interlocutor just said:

- (69) A: John can cook curry really well.  
 B: #He can cook curry really well. (entirely deaccented)

If all of the arguments, and the verb, are given,<sup>10</sup> then what remains to be focused?

- The polarity on Σ, as shown in (68b)...
- ... which is expressed either by focus on *not* or on the auxiliary in T.

<sup>8</sup> It might be possible to change the subject under very heavy contrastive-topic intonation:

(i) *John* can't make curry well, ?but that *Mary* CAN.

I put this possibility aside here, though see footnote 10.

<sup>9</sup> Given/discourse-old material generally doesn't front in English. I omit discussion of this for reasons of space, but see Samko 2016:193–5 for an analysis of why given vPs, and only vPs, can front in English.

<sup>10</sup> This is the misrepresentation/simplification. It's not a requirement, if vP is Given, for all of its subconstituents to be discourse-old/unfocused (Schwarzschild 1999). The possibility of focusing constituents vP-internally might lead to the marginal possibility I mention in footnote 8, but I put this aside here. See also Samko 2016:193:fn. 2.

- And, indeed, that is what is focused, under both verb phrase fronting and *that*-fronting:

- (70) John has been making really good curry lately.  
 a. That he (certainly) HAS been.  
 b. Making really good curry lately, he (certainly) HAS been.
- (71) Is John making curry?  
 a. That he certainly is NOT.  
 b. Making curry, he certainly is NOT.

Now let's return to the Scottish English cases:

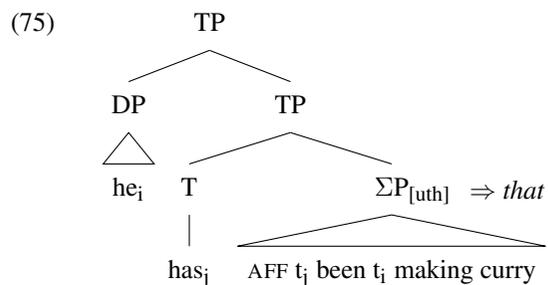
- (72) Can John make curry well? – He can THAT! [(some) ScotE]

These cases have three curious characteristics:

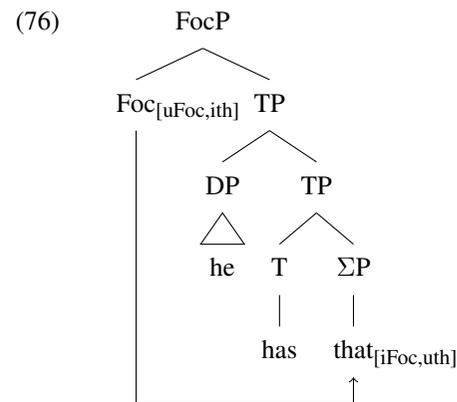
- they obligatorily bear heavy stress on the *that*
- they do not allow for the survival of 'low' (non-finite) auxiliaries (73)
- they only allow for agreement with the interlocutor – the polarity cannot change from the antecedent (74)

- (73) Has John been making curry? – He has (?\*been) THAT!
- (74) Has John been making curry? – Yes, he has THAT! / \*No, he hasn't/has not that!

I propose that Scottish English allows  $\Sigma$ P itself to bear [th]-features.



- Everything, including the polarity of the utterance, is pronounced as *that*. As an anaphor, it seeks its antecedent in the (linguistic) context, and so everything within *that* must be provided by the antecedent – capturing the 'no change of polarity' behavior.
- Placing *that* so high in the tree also ensures that it 'subsumes' low auxiliaries.
- As pointed out above, something has to be in focus in any utterance. But all of the utterance is discourse-old (it has to be, as it's been anaphorized by *that*)
- The solution: the *whole utterance* is in focus: that is, the  $\Sigma$ P bearing the [th]-features is focused.
- Concretely:  $\Sigma$ P gets its [th]-features checked in situ under agreement with a Foc head (leading to stress on the *that*, even though its content is given)



**A prediction of this analysis that may or may not be borne out:** given the success of *just/exactly* in rescuing cases like (77a), we might think that even non-Scottish speakers should be able to say (77b):

- (77) a. John wanted to become the richest man in the world, and he became (just/exactly) that.  
 b. (?I) planned to make curry this weekend, and now I will (just/exactly) that.

Sentences like (77b) sound OK-ish to *me* – but I’m a speaker who allows the ‘emphatic’ in situ cases above. One finds the relevant strings attested online. . .

- (78) a. “If you need my help, just ask.” “I might just that.” (Ronald Winters, *An Angel for Maxey*, p. 68 (Google Books))  
b. The Indians would have to improve by 20 or more wins to clinch the Central in 2011. . . I think that there is a possibility that they will exactly that. (<https://www.billjamesonline.com/article1559/>)  
c. We could live in perfect obedience to God if we really had the faith to do so. Christ came so that we could exactly that.

. . . but unfortunately I think the probability of these being typos (omitting a *do* in *do that*) is rather high. Further investigation is needed!

## 5 Remaining questions

Many and various. . .

- Is talking about ‘[th]-features’ the right way to think about it, or are they reducible to something else?
  - Is this a notion that might have any currency outside of Germanic?
  - Could they be identified with Merchant 2001’s [E]-feature, licensing ellipsis of the complement of a head (as in Bentzen et al. 2013’s analysis of *det*)?
  - If so, the current proposal would be in the same line as a line of work originating in Aelbrecht 2010, arguing that [E]-features need to be licensed under Agree with higher functional heads.
- It looks like these pronouns can have *wh*-features as well – at least in the formation of appositives, as LaCara 2012 discusses:

(79) Mary can make curry really well, which John can’t.

Is that true, and if so, why can’t you form questions out of them in English (\**What can John?*)?
- What is the link between *that* and VP ellipsis in general? There clearly is some link there: do they have the same licensing and/or recoverability conditions?

- What size of thing can be spelled out as *det/that*? Above I assumed that vP (in general) and  $\Sigma$ P (in Scottish English) could be spelled out as *that*. What is possible in Norwegian, for example? It looks like both TP and vP (VP?) can be spelled out as *det*, if *gjøre*-support in (80a) is an indication of ‘low’ *det*:

- (80) Det dukker opp problemer.  
there pop up problems  
‘There will arise problems.’
- a. Det pleier [TP å gjøre det.]  
there tends to do DET  
‘There tend to.’
- b. Det pleier [TP det].  
there tends DET  
‘There tend to.’

What about e.g. complement of non-finite auxiliaries (specifically *ha* ‘have’)? I’ve had mixed judgements on cases like (81):

- (81) Skal båten ha sunket? – Ja, den skal ha det. / Ja, det  
is.meant boat-the have sunk yes it is.meant have DET yes DET  
skal den ha.  
is.meant it have  
‘Is the boat reported to have sunk? – Yes, it is.’

⇒ **Questions, feedback and comments welcome!**

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