

Possessor Extraction in English and Danish

Current Topics in English Linguistics

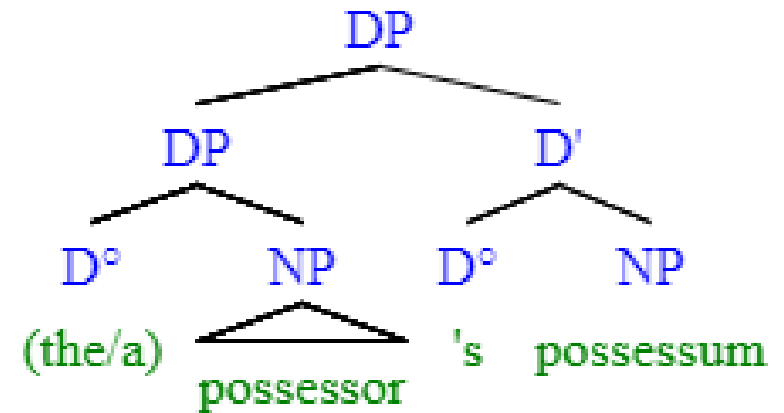
Maria Mørch Dahl

Inspired by...

MINDS presentation: *Determiner phrase or genitive phrase?*
(Comparative Syntax) by Peter Katballe-Kristensen

- Two frameworks for the possessive phrase
- Possessor extraction in Western Jutlandic

... and Davis (2021): “Possessor Extraction
in colloquial English”



Standard: pied-piping

Standard English (pied-piping)

Mary is the author [**whose new book**]_k they said ____k is good.

(Davis 2021, 291)

Colloquial English (*possessor extraction*)

Mary is the author **who**_k they said [____k **'s new book**] is good].

(Davis 2021, 292)

Standard: pied-piping

Standard Danish (pied-piping)

[Hvis cykel]_k er det ____k?

[Whose bike]_k is that ____k?

Colloquial Danish? (*possessor extraction*)

Hvem_k er det [____k**s cykel**]?

Who_k is that [____k's bike]?

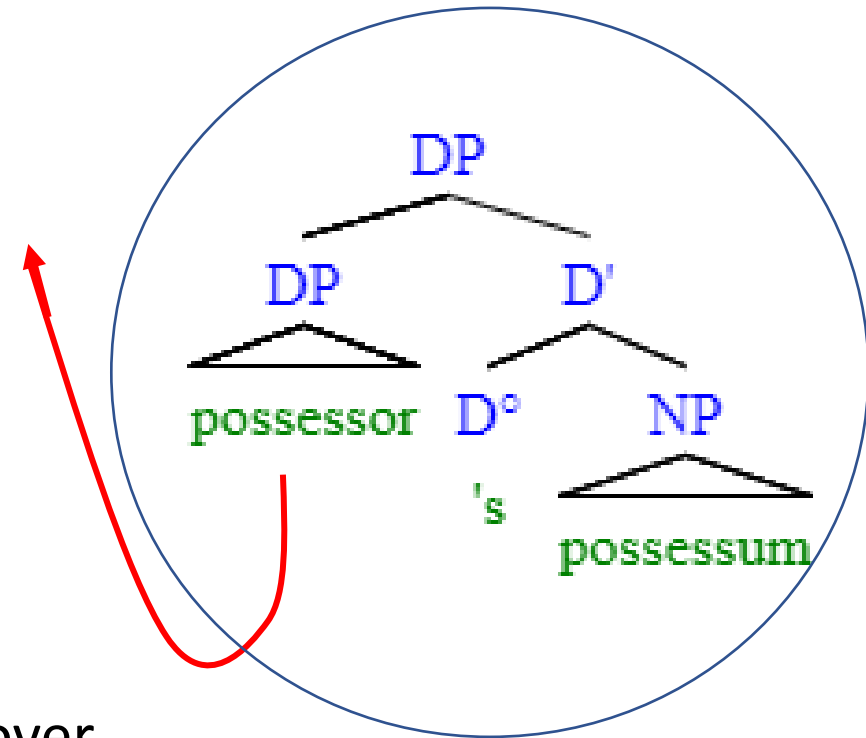
(Vikner 2014, 204)

What is possessor extraction?

Extraction of a possessor from a possessive phrase:

[_{DP} Hvem_k] er det [_{DP} ____k's cykel]?
(Vikner 2014, 204)

I can't remember [_{DP} who_i] I said [_{DP} 's friend] is coming over
(Davis 2021, 295)



Davis 2021

- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
*Hvem er dets cykel? / *Who is that’s bike?*

- ii. “English PE is possible in any A’-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example *wh*-movement and,
I can’t remember who I said’s friend is coming over

- iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).
** Who do they think Sue found’s cat today?*
Who do they think’s cat Sue found today?

Danish possessor extraction?

- Clause-bound movement
 - Embedded questions
 - Displacement of possessive phrase before extraction?
- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
 - ii. “English PE is possible in any A'-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example wh-movement and,
 - iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).

My experiment – sentence types

- A. Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men hvis kat var det? (pied-piping)
- B. Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men hvem var dets kat? (PE)
- C. Jeg ved ikke hvis kat det var Søren fandt i skoven. (pied-piping)
- D. Jeg ved ikke hvem det var kat Søren fandt i skoven. (PE)
- E. Jeg ved ikke hvem det var Søren fandts kat i skoven. (PE?)

My experiment – design

Recording of **35 sentences**

- **5 of each type** + 10 distractors (5 grammatical, 5 ungrammatical)
- Quick succession, follow your intuition

10 participants gave a score to each sentence from **1 “Helt forkert”** [completely wrong] to **5 “Helt OK”** [completely OK]

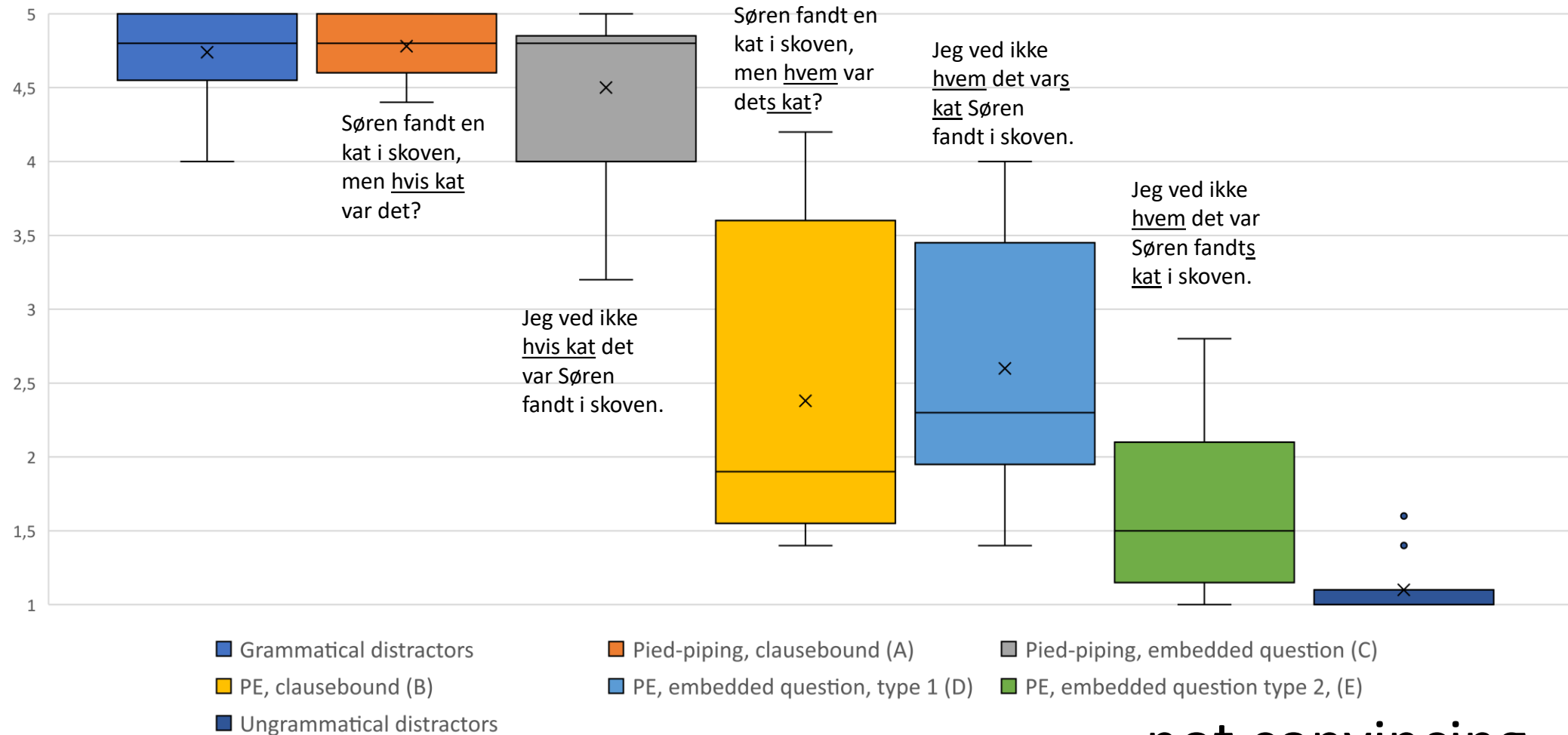


Svarark

Alder: _____ Høre telefoner (sæt ring): inde i øret/udenpå øret
Køn: _____
Hvor er du vokset op? _____

Sætning 1	Helt forkert						Helt OK
Sætning 2	Helt forkert						Helt OK
Sætning 3	Helt forkert						Helt OK
Sætning 4	Helt forkert						Helt OK

My experiment – results



not convincing... but!

not convincing... but!

	Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men <u>hvis</u> kat var det?	Jeg ved ikke <u>hvis</u> kat det var Søren fandt i skoven.	Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men <u>hvem</u> var dets <u>kat</u> ?	Jeg ved ikke <u>hvem</u> det var <u>kat</u> Søren fandt i skoven.	Jeg ved ikke <u>hvem</u> det var Søren fandts <u>kat</u> i skoven.
Participant number, origin/age	<i>Pied-piping, clausebound (A)</i>	<i>Pied-piping, emb. question (C)</i>	<i>PE, clausebound (B)</i>	<i>PE, emb. question, type 1 (D)</i>	<i>PE, emb. question, type 2 (E)</i>
1, CJ/20	5.0	5.0	1.6	1.4	1.0
2, WJ/24	4.6	4.0	1.8	2.2	1.4
3, CJ/23	4.4	4.8	1.4	3.4	1.4
4, CJ/57	4.8	4.8	1.8	2.2	1.2
5, WJ/28	5.0	5.0	2.0	2.0	2.4
6, WJ/28	5.0	4.8	3.6	4.0	2.8
7, WJ/56	4.8	4.8	1.4	2.4	1.6
8, CWJ/25	4.6	3.2	4.2	3.6	1.8
9, F/27	5.0	4.6	3.6	3.0	2.0
10, WJ/27	4.6	4.0	2.4	1.8	1.0

not convincing... but!

Preliminary survey:

Søren fandt en kat i skoven. Hvem var dets?

Søren fandt en kat i skoven. Hvis kat var det?

Jeg ved ikke hvem det var kat Søren fandt i skoven.

Jeg ved ikke hvis kat det var Søren fandt i skoven.

Jeg ved ikke hvem det var Søren fandts kat i skoven.

- Informal interviews

(I asked some family members at a Christmas party)

- Some said the **PE ones were fine,**

- Some said they knew **PE were not correct,** but probably wouldn't really notice them + would also say something similar themselves

not convincing... but!

- Occurrences/mentions in linguistic literature:

- Vikner 2014: *Hvem er dets cykel?*

- ”enkelte tilfælde af -s der ikke ser ud til at kræve tilstedeværelsen af en possessor i dansk”

- [a few instances of -s that do not seem to require the presence of a possessor in Danish]

- Dahlerup 1926: *Hvem er dets?*

- ”ved siden af *hvis* findes nydannelser paa -s som *hvads* samt især [...] *hvems* ell. konstruktioner som *hvem er dets*”

- [besides *hvis*, there are innovations with -s such as [*what's*] and especially [...] [*who's*] or constructions such as *who is it's*]

- Ravnholt 2006: *Hvem er dets? Jeg ved ikke hvem det er's.*

- Og så er der jo *Hvem er det's?* og *Jeg ved ikke hvem det er's.*

- And then there are *Who is it's?* and *I don't know who it is's*

- Bostrup 2018: *Hvis er dets?*

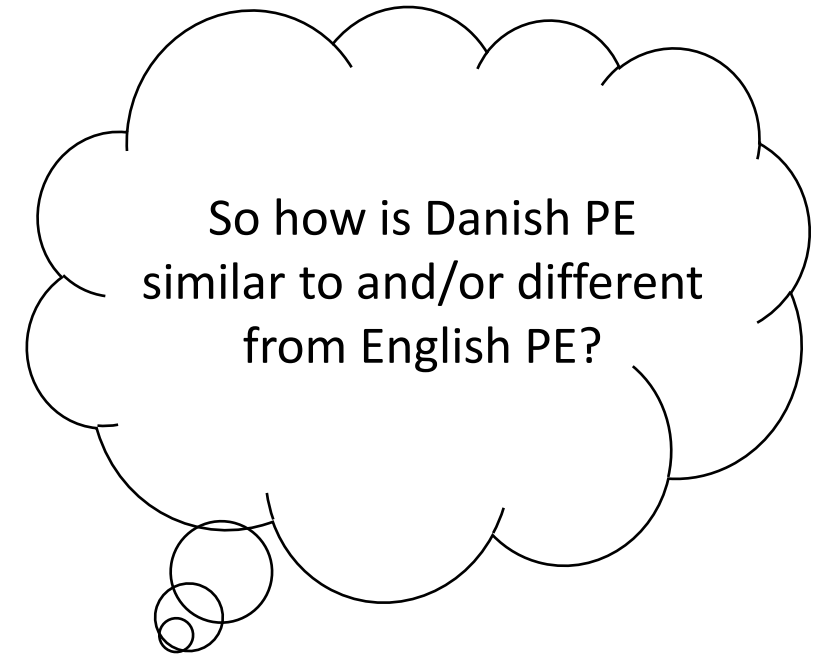
- ”Med samme logik [som i gruppegenitiven] kan man så i talesproget sætte et s på stort set alt”

- [the group genitive makes it “possible in colloquial language to attach an s to pretty much anything”]

not convincing, but it seems...

- Mentions in linguistic literature
- Preliminary survey
- 3-4 of my participants

- Seems to suggest that PE exists in Danish
 - It is (probably) acceptable to some speakers



Davis 2021

- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
*Hvem er dets cykel? / *Who is that’s bike?*

- ii. “English PE is possible in any A’-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example *wh*-movement and,
I can’t remember who I said’s friend is coming over

- iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).
** Who do they think Sue found’s cat today?*
Who do they think’s cat Sue found today?

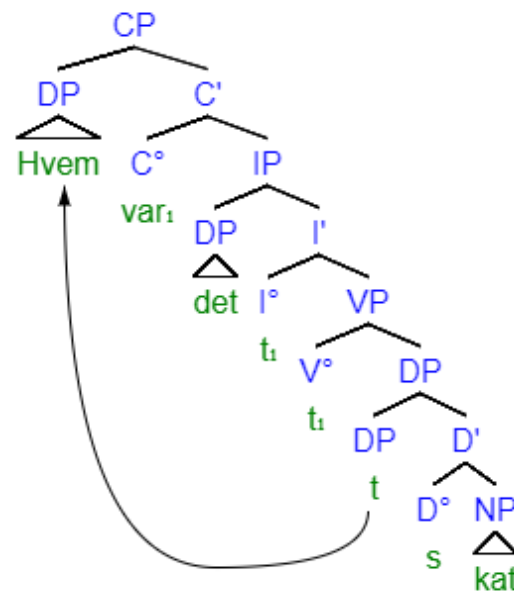
it seems that...

- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
- ii. “English PE is possible in any A'-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example wh-movement and,
- iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).

a. Danish PE is possible for clausebound movement:

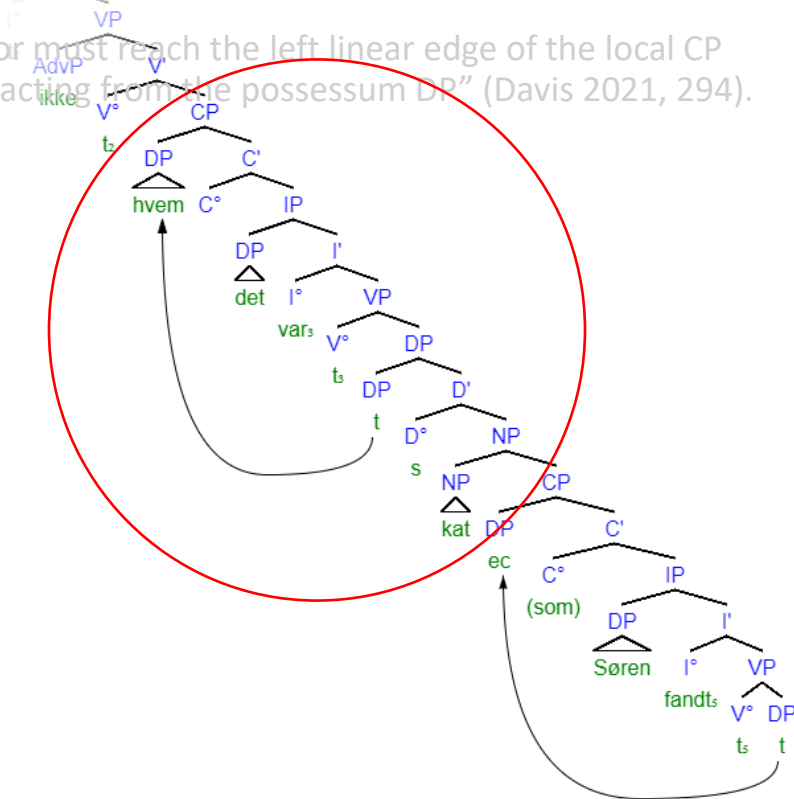
Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men hvem var dets kat?

** Søren found a cat in the forest, but who was it's cat?*



it seems that...

- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
- ii. “English PE is possible in any A'-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example wh-movement and,
- iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).



- a. Danish PE is possible for clausebound movement:
Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men
hvem var dets kat?

- b. Danish PE is possible in the context of embedded questions:

Jeg ved ikke hvem det
vars kat Søren fandt i skoven.

I can't remember who I said's friend is
coming over.
(Davis 2021)

it seems that...

- i. “English PE is not possible for clause-bound movement” (Davis 2021, 296),
 - ii. “English PE is possible in any A’-movement context” (Davis 2021, 295), for example wh-movement and,
 - iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).
- a. Danish PE **is** possible for clausebound movement:
Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men
hvem var dets kat?
 - b. Danish PE is possible in the context of embedded questions:
Jeg ved ikke hvem det
vars kat Søren fandt i skoven.

Unfortunately, iii. wasn't tested in my experiment,
so that'll have to wait for future research

Conclusion

- Danish possessor extraction of *some types* in *some contexts* seems to be acceptable to *some speakers*
- To establish generalizations, (**much**) *further research is needed*
- In neither English nor Danish “should” PE be possible, but it is
 - Danish *might* have PE as a possibility in more contexts than English, e.g. *clausebound movement* (*Hvem er dets cykel?*)

Further questions about Danish PE

1. Other movement contexts than embedded questions
2. Restrictions on clausebound movement (is PE always possible?)
3. Is clefting necessary? (probably not)
4. Is PE from within an embedded clause possible? (probably)
5. Overt vs. elided possessum NP (might not matter)

Reference list

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- Dahlerup, Verner. 1926. "hvis." *Ordbog over det danske Sprog* [Dictionary of the Danish Language], Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab. Copenhagen: Gyldendal. Accessed February 8, 2023. <https://www.ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog?query=hvis>.
- Davis, Colin P. 2021. "Possessor Extraction in Colloquial English: Evidence for Successive Cyclicity and Cyclic Linearization." *Linguistic Inquiry*, 52 (2): 291-332. doi:10.1162/ling_a_00369.
- Gavruseva, Elena and Rosalind Thornton. 2001. "Getting It Right: Acquisition of Whose-Questions in Child English." *Language Acquisition* 9 (3): 229-267. doi:10.1207/S15327817LA0903_2.
- Katballe-Kristensen, Peter. 2022. "Determiner Phrase or Genitive Phrase? An examination of possessives structures in Danish and English." *Journal of Language Works* 7 (1): 22-39. <https://www.tidsskrift.dk/lwo/article/view/132782>.
- Ravnholt, Ole. 2006. "Gruppegenitiv: Søren og Sofies sølvbryllup. [Group genitive: Søren and Sofie's Silver Jubilee." *sproget.dk*, May 8, 2006. Bogense: Dansk Sprognævn. Accessed February 8, 2023. <https://www.sproget.dk/raad-og-regler/artikler-mv/svarbase/SV00000063>.
- Vikner, Sten. 2014. "Possessorens status inden for nominalgruppen" [The status of the possessor inside the nominal group]. *Ny Forskning i Grammatik* 21: 193-211. doi:10.7146/nfg.v22i21.23570.

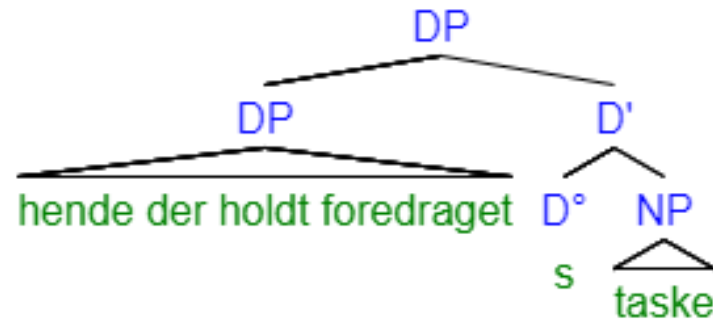
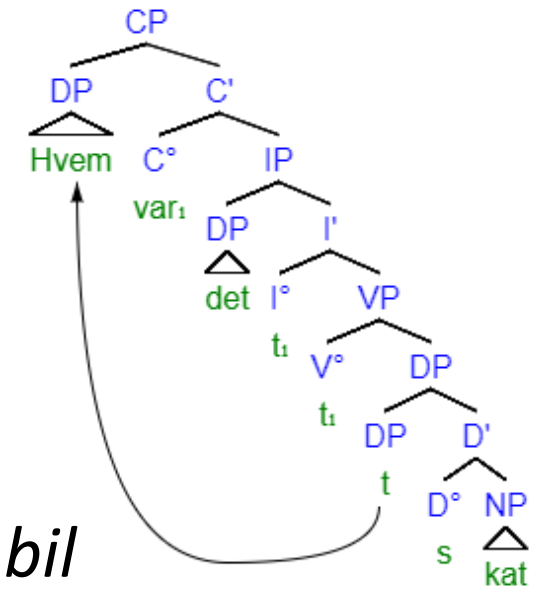
Bonus: *of*-possessive (English)

- They said he was a friend of John.
- Who_i did they say he was a friend of ____i?
- [Of whom]_i did they say he was a friend t_i?

“Possessor extraction” in this case is just normal preposition stranding

Bonus: *group genitive*

- Ravnholt 2006, Bostrup 2018
- *Mie og Mortens_s bil* rather than *Mies_s og Mortens_s bil*
- "Jamen så må det være [hende der holdt foredraget]_s" taske
(Bostrup 2018)



Bonus: what about iii.?

- iii. “A possessor must reach the left linear edge of the local CP before extracting from the possessum DP” (Davis 2021, 294).

Who do they think [_{CP} 's cat Sue found today]?

** Who do they think [_{CP} Sue found's cat today]?*

Davis (2021) calls this “displacement”,

and I wanted to examine it for Danish with these:

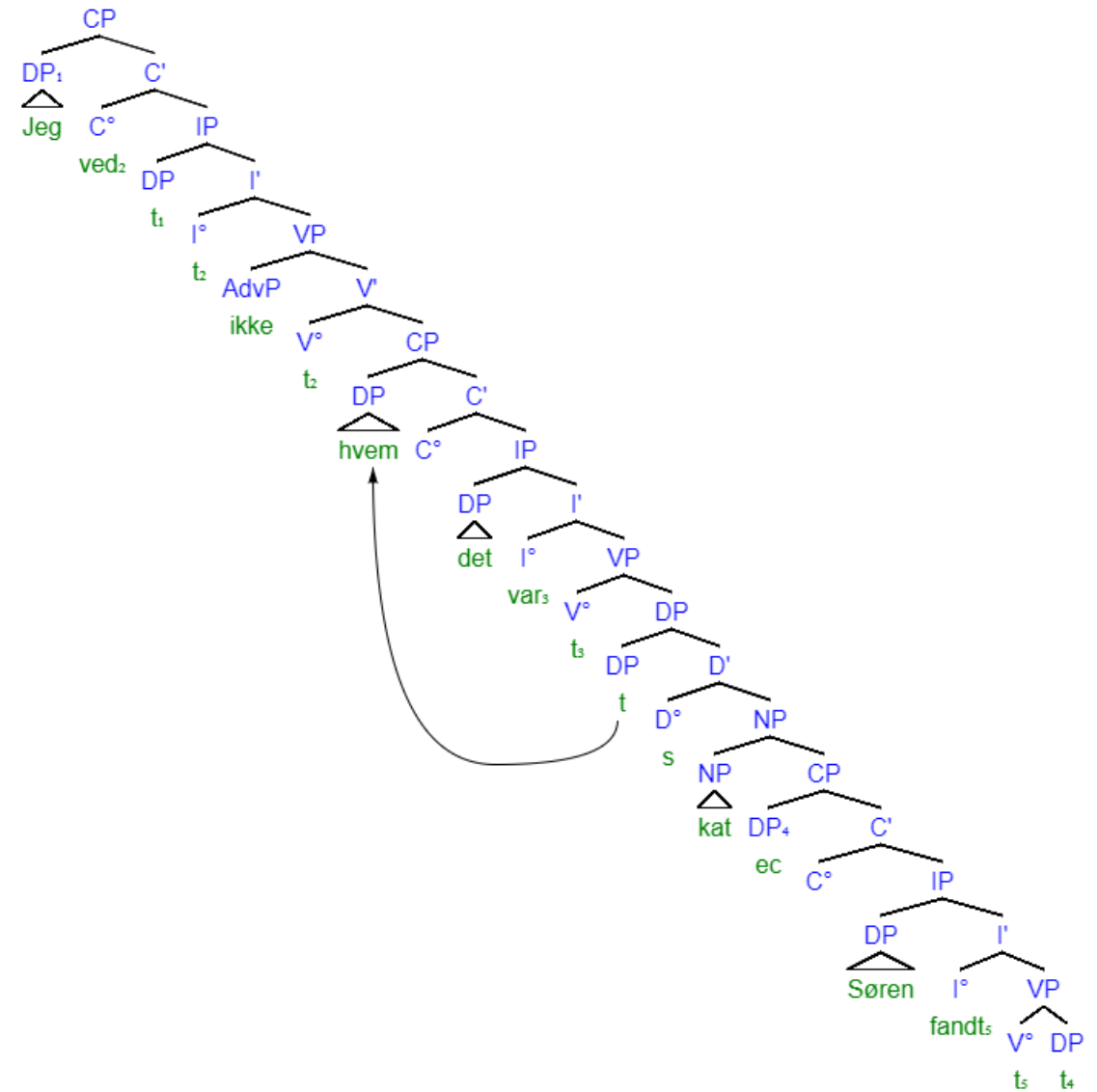
Jeg ved ikke hvem det vars kat Søren fandt i skoven.

Jeg ved ikke hvem det var Søren fandts kat i skoven.

but...

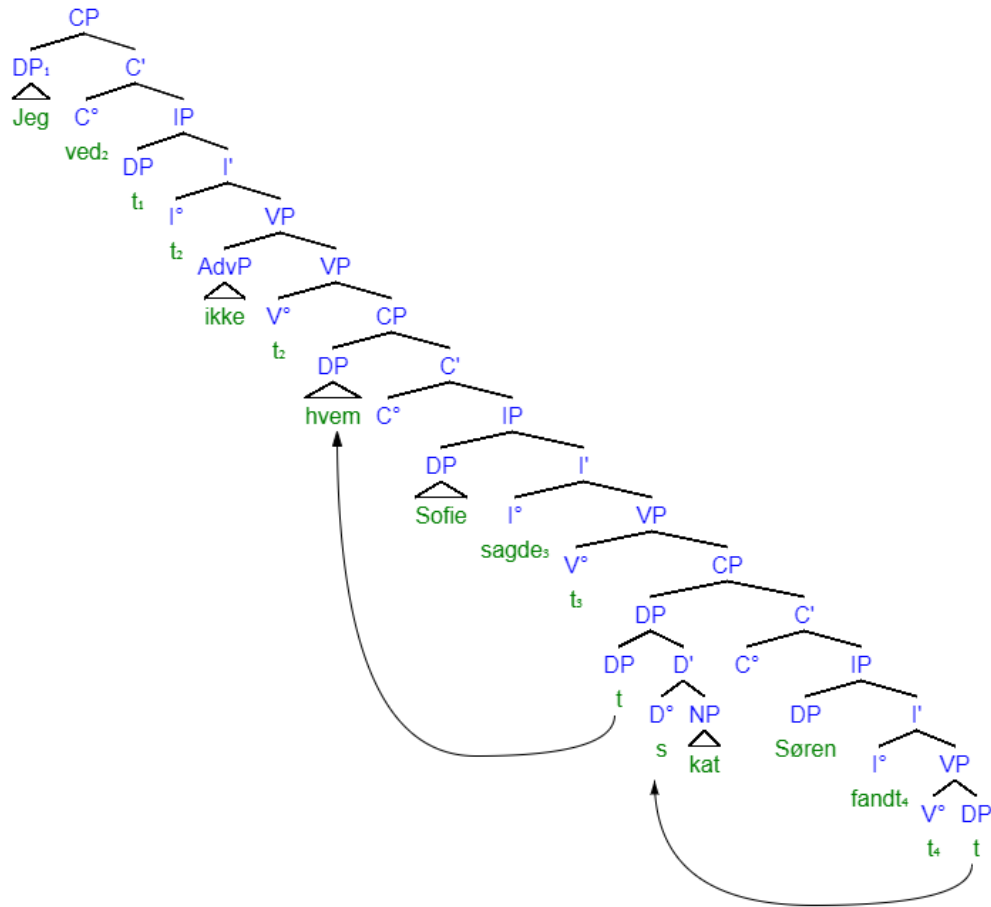
Bonus: what about iii.?

- *Hvem's* base position is not inside the embedded CP
- "Displacement to the edge of the local CP" does not apply

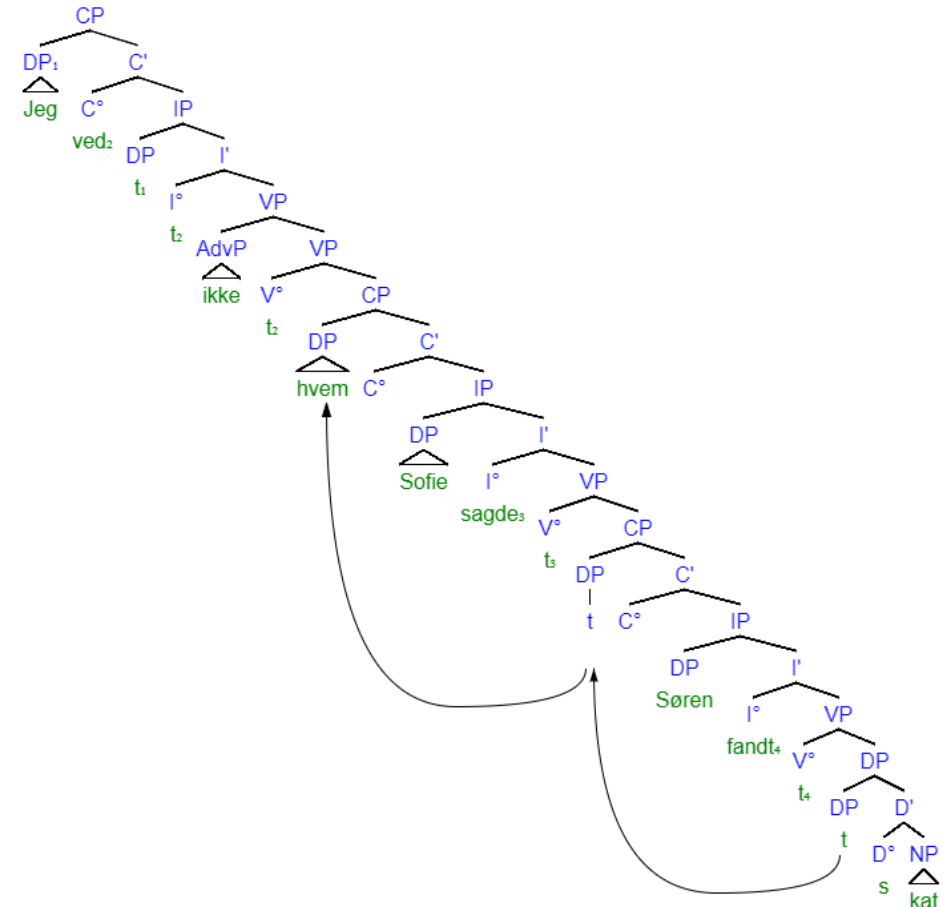


Bonus: what about iii.?

Jeg ved ikke hvem Sofie sagdes kat
Søren fandt i skoven.



Jeg ved ikke hvem Sofie sagde Søren
fandts kat i skoven.



Further questions about Danish PE

1. Other movement contexts than embedded questions

Free relative:

I'll speak to [who_k ever you suggest [[t_k's idea] is the best]].

Lad mig tale med hvem_i end du synes [t_i's ide] er bedst.

Topicalization:

John's life might be boring, but let me tell you about Jim. [This guy]_k, I think [[t_k's story] will intrigue you].

John's liv er måske kedeligt, men lad mig fortælle dig om Jim. [Den her fyr]_i tror jeg [t_is historie] vil fascinere dig.

Further questions about Danish PE

2. Restrictions on clausebound movement

I haven't spent time working out what these restrictions could be (yet)

Further questions about Danish PE

3. The importance of clefting

These are not cleft sentences (there is no relative clause), but they have "det er", so there is some similarity

Needs to be tested



[Redacted] det hvide
hvem er dets? 😂😂

Synes godt om Svar 4 år

https://www.facebook.com/sitlyDK/photos/a.595996303894762/926516617509394/?paipv=0&eav=AfbKh9HE0KiGlvEprDslwaEKtcD2v_oQOV9yjYwTqo1tpLWdeGfRyeo-5fde4IG-dKg



Niklas (:
Jeg er ligeglad hvem det ers (:
Jeg tror ikke de passer til maskinen (:

https://www.scootergalleri.dk/galleri/267813-suzuki_street_magic

Further questions about Danish PE

4. PE from within embedded clause

See "Bonus: what about iii.?"

Further questions about Danish PE

5. Overt/elided possessum NP

Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men hvem var dets kat?

Søren fandt en kat i skoven, men hvem var dets?

Needs to be tested

Further questions about Danish PE

- Judgment vs. Production
 - Elicited production experiment (Gavruseva and Thornton 2001)
 - Christy and Kath
 - Context, listener, topics...