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Introduction: A trip around the *Globe*

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Globe: A Journal of Language, Culture and Communication (henceforth, *Globe*) is in my opinion a success story. To me, it is very much a symbol of academia's victory over destructive external political forces. Basically a story of making lemonade when life hands you lemons, *Globe* was launched by a research group at Aalborg University amidst the chaos of very negative ramifications of many bad decisions made by the politicians governing (one is tempted to use "mismanaging" instead) the education and research sector in Denmark at the time.

In fact, the journal was directly inspired by one of the most embarrassing political failures in this sector and rose to become a beacon of the democratization of information within an academic context. On the occasion of the journal's tenth anniversary, I thought it would be fitting to take the reader on a trip around the *Globe*, so to speak, and have a look at its history, its role as an important open access publication channel nationally and internationally, and its contribution to the democratization of information in contemporary academia.

Without further ado, let us step into the proverbial DeLorean time-machine (80s kids will understand this reference) and travel back to the 2010s.

The embarrassing failure that was the Danish Bibliometric Research Indicator

In 2015, when the very first issue of *Globe* was published, the education and research sector in Denmark was in many ways like today, but in many ways also very different. Then, like today, the sector was characterized by constant reforms initiated by politicians who typically had absolutely no idea what they were doing due to a complete lack of understanding of the workings of research and education and were either oblivious – or, worse, they did not care – of the damage every single one of their reforms caused to this sector. Then, like now, the universities constantly underwent structural changes because of this incessant political flip-flopping. New political initiatives were launched at a pace that was very difficult to keep up with, while others just loomed threateningly on the horizon without anyone knowing when, or even if, they would actually be implemented. Political measures already in action could be terminated at any point, sometimes even unceremoniously.

One such political measure was the infamous *Bibliometriske Forskningsindikator* (Danish Bibliometric Research Indicator), or BFI for short. Introduced in 2009, the BFI was framed as a way to allocate university funding based on publication activities (Videnskabsministeriet 2009). However, many researchers suspected that the BFI was in reality based on politicians' distrust of researchers, whom the politicians saw as downright lazy buggers. In other words, the suspicion was that the BFI was introduced as an incentive to make researchers work harder. In a nutshell, publication channels such as journals, book series, and publishers were divided into two levels based on excellence: Level 1 represented "normal-level" publications, and Level 2 represented "high-level" publications; an optional third level, representing "excellent" publications was introduced for journals and book series as well. The logic behind the BFI was that publications in channels included in the BFI would earn the universities points, with Level 2 publications triggering more points than Level 1 ones (and, of course, where applicable, Level 3 ones would trigger more points than Level 2 ones); publications in channels not included in the BFI would trigger zero points. Each point was worth a particular amount of money (the exact amount would vary from year to year) that would be allocated to the universities after an annual tally. To be included in the BFI, a publication channel had to make use of legitimate peer reviewing as a type of quality assurance. The BFI was supposed to be dynamic such that new channels could be added, and channels already registered could be promoted or demoted between

levels and could even be removed from the system altogether. While there was no disagreement that quality assurance was vitally important, it meant in practice that more than sixty (!) groups of experts in all fields of research in Denmark would have to monitor publication channels and ensure that only legitimate channels were included, and so an incredibly complex hierarchy of groups was deployed to manage the BFI. As you can imagine, not only was this gamification of research highly criticized but so were the unnecessarily heavy and complex management of the BFI itself and its need for constant monitoring. For instance, researchers severely criticized the BFI already back in 2009, calling it badly organized, amateurish, embarrassing, absurd, and a downright waste of time (Tingstrøm 2009). While it did result in a radical increase in the number of publications by researchers at Danish institutions (Larsen & Ingwersen 2014), the BFI was criticized, among (many) other things, for deprioritizing Danish-language publication channels (Hoffmann 2018), devaluing research activities within the Humanities and Social Sciences (Meyer 2018), focusing on quantity over quality (Gad 2023), and contributing to the commodification of research as well as stifling collaborations in action research. Regarding this last point, for instance, Olesen (2014: 138), reflecting on a particularly complex action research project that involved collaboration with a hospital, writes:

> I do not know if either they or I would dare to dive into such a project again because of the time used on working with the inclusion of different knowledge forms and on documenting the process to be used for further reflections on the ward led to fewer Danish national bibliometric research indicator registered, peer-reviewed articles. Something the hospital needed as much as the university to get future research funded.

Moreover, universities started integrating BFI points in their employment strategies causing a considerable worsening of the overall psychological work environment (Mouritzen et al. 2018). I do remember much talk back then about the fear of ending up a so-called "nulforsker" (i.e., "zero-researcher"; that is, a researcher that for whatever reason failed to score any points over a period of two or three years) and what consequences that might have for one's future employment. This fear was by no means an irrational fear, given that the entire publication process of, say, a monograph or even a single article can easily last two or three years. On top of that, the dynamic nature of the BFI meant that one could never really be sure whether one's publications would be Level 1 or Level 2 publications or, indeed, whether the publication channel in question might end up being removed from the BFI altogether. Granted, it was never the intention that the BFI should be incorporated into employment policies, but, since the sector was severely underfunded back then, like it is now, it is hard to see any other outcome than universities incorporating BFI points as incentives – be it as a stick or as a carrot – to make their employees generate more publications and thus more money.

And, after much critique, a decision was made in December 2021 to discontinue the BFI, and it was unceremoniously terminated in 2022 (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet 2023). Interestingly, Aalborg University chose to replace the BFI with a "homegrown" research indicator, inspired by the Norwegian *Kanalregistret*, used for internal distribution of funding among departments and faculties (Pasgaard 2023).

Making lemonade from lemons

As the reader will have noticed, the very first issue of *Globe* was published during the reign of the BFI. In fact, the BFI was a central catalyst in the establishment of the journal. Researchers at Aalborg University, like basically all other research institutions at the time, were under great pressure to generate BFI-registered research publications. Seeing the need for a serious publication channel, the members of the (now defunct) Languages and Linguistics research group at the (now defunct) Department of Culture and Global Studies, which was a department run as a collaborative effort

between the (now defunct) Faculty of Humanities and the (now defunct) Faculty of Social Sciences, decided to establish a legitimate open access peer-reviewed research journal focusing on culture, linguistics, and communication studies. Mind you, this was an era when open access publishing was marred by predatory journals doing fake peer-reviewing and charging hefty publication fees. Furthermore, as you can imagine, in an environment where research publication had become gamified and commodified, there was a real risk of researchers falling into the trap of publishing in predatory channels – be it out of desperation or, more likely, a blend of desperation and ignorance of the shady practices of predatory publishers. Needless to say, there was a genuine need for open access journals practicing real peer-reviewing and offering not just free open access to readers but also publication without fees for authors. Within the broad field of language studies, there were very few journals of this type in Denmark, exceptions being the journals *Hermes* and the now discontinued *RASK*, both of which moved their publications into the open access space quite early on.

The idea was the journal should serve not just as a publication channel for local researchers at Aalborg University but also researchers at other universities in Denmark as well as international researchers. The driving ambition was that the journal, like *Hermes* and *RASK*, would publish rigorously peer-reviewed, high-quality research articles that would serve as genuine contributions to their respective fields. It was also, and this was no secret, a hope that the journal would end up being registered in the BFI, as it not only lived up to the general principles of good practice within research publication but also to the BFI requirements. An editorial group was established, consisting of members of the Languages and Linguistics research group, and an international advisory board was assembled too. It was agreed that the journal, seeing that it was anchored in the Department of Culture and Global Studies at Aalborg University, should have a name that not only captured this affiliation but also reflected the intended international reach. *Globe* seemed like a suitably representative and catchy title, and the more descriptive sub-title, *A Journal of Language, Culture and Communication*, captured both the institutional affiliation and the journal's intended scope.

The first call for papers was issued, and after a rigorous peer-review process that took place in 2014, the outcome was the very first issue, which was published in February 2015. While the format and publishing schedule have changed slightly over the years, the inaugural issue set the scene for *Globe* as we know it today: a mix of thematically linked articles and stand-alone articles, all of which make valuable contributions to the study of culture, language, and communication. The inaugural issue thus consisted of a thematic section on language and identity featuring research articles on Italian dialects, language and generational change in the United Arab Emirates, personal pronouns and community construction, Tyneside English morphosyntax and phonology, identity construction in Danish and German contracts, and self-narratives and discourses in patients with brain injuries. The open section had three articles to offer: one on negative interrogatives in American English, one on scalar adjectival constructions, and one on speech acts in professional-to-layperson medical texts. To celebrate the launch of the journal, three celebratory essays by superstar linguists – namely, Hartmut Haberland, Per Aage Brandt, and Jacob Mey (sadly, Brandt and Mey are no longer with us) – were included in the inaugural issue as well. With the first issue published, the journal was assigned an ISSN and then registered in the BFI.

This was indeed a case of "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade": the lemons were the BFI and all its negative ramifications, and the lemonade was the inaugural issue of *Globe*. More lemonade was served in August 2015 in the form of the second issue which featured articles on metaphors, N-grams, Cameroon English proverbs, anti-feminist discourse, Kantian grammar, and stylistics. The next volume was a special issue in the form of a festschrift dedicated to Per Durst-Andersen containing papers originally presented at an event at Copenhagen Business School celebrating his 60th birthday. This would be the first of several peer-reviewed thematic issues, some of which served as conference proceedings and others as publication outlets for different types of research collaborations. Thus, *Globe* took on yet another important role in terms of open access

publication. It is thanks to *Globe* that contributions to an international conference on language contact in border zones and multilingual cities held at the University of Copenhagen were published in 2023 in article form in issue 15 of *Globe*; the same year, *Globe* also facilitated, in issue 17, the publication of a festschrift for Erling Strudsholm in celebration of his 70th birthday. Issue 10 from 2020 is entirely dedicated to Systemic Functional Linguistics and features papers presented at the 14th conference on Nordic Systemic Functional Linguistics, and issue 12 from the following year contains papers originally presented at a research symposium on typology and multilingualism held in Bergen in October 2019. The beauty of these special issues is that not only do they feature peer-reviewed quality research articles, but they also show that, despite the fact that political forces in Denmark have fostered – maybe inadvertently or maybe on purpose – a competitive milieu in the sector, researchers still collaborate across national universities.

Globe and the democracy of information

Globe is not just a legitimate publication channel for research within culture, language, and communication. Operating with open access without imposing publication fees, the journal is in many ways a punch in the face of predatory journals and simultaneously also an alternative to the paywalled publication channels that are so commonplace in the industry of academic publishing. Think about it: publishing in journals like *Globe* is free, your articles will be openly accessible to all types of readers, ranging from interested lay people to students to fellow experts and specialists, and there is quality assurance in the form of peer reviewing. Thus, with journals like *Globe*, predatory publication outlets become irrelevant. Not only that, journals like *Globe* are also very much the epitome of the democratization of information within academia. True, there is still an idea among certain scholars that publishing in online channels is somehow not as prestigious as publishing on paper, but, when it comes to prestige versus outreach, I think the latter is much more important; in a way, then, *Globe* is also a slap in the face of the elitism that still haunts academia.

So exactly what type of research, then, is published in *Globe*? A bird's eye look at the journal's archive of articles reveals some very general areas, some of which are listed below along with a few representative articles:

- Stylistics: In many ways, stylistics bridges an unfortunate gap between linguistics and literary studies and may arguably be viewed as a truly philological discipline. It is a particularly important discipline in connection with the training of foreign language teachers who in their professional lives need to balance language teaching and literature teaching. Several articles falling under the rubric of stylistics have been published in *Globe*. One example is Jensen et al. (2018); applying methods from corpus stylistics and theory from cognitive stylistics, they find that distant-reading can help identify patterns of language use that would be difficult to spot through close-reading and that such an approach can help identify linguistic realizations of thematic motifs. Specifically, Jensen et al. (2018) link the frequent use of floronyms in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to underlying metaphors throughout the narrative. Tackling sixteenth century German travel literature, Naiditsch (2015) meticulously maps the many linguistic dimensions of Daniel Ecklin's "Reiß zum heiligen Grab". Herrmann et al. (2017) study the use of non-standard varieties of English (more specifically the use of Scots) in the novel *Trainspotting*, and, drawing on theory from sociolinguistics, they find that it foregrounds not just stereotypes to support the characterization within the narrative but also that it foregrounds place and social class.

- Discourse analysis: Discourse analysis has long been a focal area of research at Aalborg University – be it critical discourse analysis or other types of discourse analysis – and thus it is no surprise that the journal has published multiple articles oriented towards the study of

discourse. For instance, Leung (2017) looks at what he calls the discursive positioning of the Falkland Islands in British and Argentinian discourses. Making use of corpus data and collocational analysis, Leung (2017) finds that, in British discourse, there is a tendency to position the Falklands as an independent territory while, in Argentinian discourses, the Falklands are positioned as part of the dominion of Argentina. While Leung (2017) makes use of the quantitative techniques of corpus-assisted discourse studies, Christiansen & Høyer's (2015) analysis of anti-feminist sentiments in online settings is primarily qualitative and overtly positioned within the Faircloughian tradition of critical discourse analysis. More specifically, this article studies the use of the constructions "feminism doesn't represent me, I am not a victim!, and I don't need feminism because" in posts on a tumblr blog called *Women Against Feminism*, and it is found that these constructions represent a perception of feminism as aggressive and condescending, which ignores the many nuances of feminism as such.

- Language and communication in organizational and professional contexts: An area that has received much attention nationally in Denmark and, of course, internationally is language and communication in organizations and other professional settings. No less than four universities in Denmark count this among their central areas of research (more specifically, Copenhagen Business School, Aarhus University, the University of Southern Denmark, and Aalborg University). Therefore, in addition to a few stand-alone articles, the thematic sections in issues 3 and 9 of *Globe* are dedicated to professional communication.

- Language and culture: As mentioned above, *Globe* was originally published under the auspices of the Department of Culture and Global Studies, and, thus, in the very early stages of discussing what the scope of the journal should include, there was agreement that the interaction between language and culture should be one of the cornerstones of *Globe*. Therefore, it is no surprise that several articles addressing this topic from many different perspectives have been published in the journal. For instance, Dam (2016) discusses the interplay between language use and social constructions, providing compelling arguments for combining cognitive-linguistic and social-constructivist theoretical perspectives in the study of socially relevant categories, such as gender categories, ethnic categories, and legal categories. Amoakohene et al. (2024) report on a study of presidential inaugural addresses in Ghanian and American contexts and identify differences in cohesive discursive strategies, which they ascribe to the politicians' different cultural backgrounds. Addressing humor in intercultural communication between Danes and non-Danes, Lundquist (2021) focuses on verbal humor and shows how it is linked to socialization processes and cultural values.

- Language teaching and learning: A number of articles addressing various aspects of teaching and learning language have seen publication in *Globe*, reflecting not only the importance and relevance of language didactics as a research field but also highlighting that, unlike what some scholars within other disciplines in the humanities mistakenly think, it is indeed a serious field of research. For instance, Gebauer et al. (2024) present the findings of a study pertaining to a teaching initiative called "German as an Additional Competence", which focuses on teaching practical German to university students within a wide range of degree programs. Making use of semi-structured interviews, Gebauer et al. (2024) address the motivations of participants in this teaching program and identify a range of motivational factors. While this study is based on qualitative methods, Madsen (2020) applies inferential statistics to see if students' grammar exam results can be predicted from their performances in home assignments throughout the course, which his results indicate to be the case. The findings also suggest that the final exam score is not necessarily determined by students' entry level understanding of grammar but

rather how they progress during the course. All of this provides empirical foundations to support the idea that home assignments are indeed helpful to students' learning. Also addressing grammar, Haugaard & Jensen (2020) explore the use of young adult fiction as a way to increase upper secondary level learners' understanding of English grammar. Focusing on modal verbs in the *The Hunger Games* franchise, Haugaard & Jensen (2020) find that pupils not only gained a solid understanding of modality but also gained insight into how the use of modal markers contributed to literary characterization in that many of them found that modal verbs also made characters in the narrative seem hesitant and lacking in confidence. Linking their findings to the field of pedagogical stylistics, Haugaard & Jensen (2020) suggest that such an integration of grammar and literature nurtures a functional perspective on grammar in learners.

- Text linguistics: Several articles falling under the rubric of text linguistics (here understood in the broadest possible sense) have been published in *Globe* over the years. Like stylistics and discourse studies, text linguistics looks at the interaction between linguistic phenomena and larger textual and extra-textual structures. Specifically, text linguistics focuses on how linguistic units contribute to overall textual features such as, but not limited to, textual cohesion and coherence, topic flow, and information structure as well as contextual features (e.g., genre, intentionality, and participation structure). Larsen (2022) looks at the interaction between speech acts and textual macrostructures in German tenancy contracts. She shows that text segments are associated with particular speech act functions all of which feed into the overall function of a contract – namely, ENTER INTO AGREEMENT. Turning to a very different genre, Jensen et al. (2016) investigate politeness strategies in e-mail openings and closings across four languages – namely, Danish, Swedish, French, and Italian – and pinpoint a range of overlaps and differences, which they ascribe to underlying cultural differences. Haugaard & Laursen (2021) compare management forewords in Danish and Spanish annual reports and find salient cross-language differences in move structure in their data, which, like in Jensen et al. (2016), are ascribed to cultural differences.

- Sociolinguistics: Addressing the interplay between linguistic variation (or, more broadly, language use) and social identity, sociolinguistics was along with pragmatics for a long time one of the most important usage-oriented alternatives to Chomskian formal linguistics. While Chomskian linguistics has now largely lost its prominence, and other types of functionalist linguistics have joined sociolinguistics and pragmatics as influential approaches to language, sociolinguistics – be it variationist sociolinguistics or social constructivist sociolinguistics – remains hugely important today. *Globe* has seen its fair share of sociolinguistically-oriented articles. An early contribution is Meluzzi's (2015) study of the linkage between Italo-Romance dialects spoken in Bozen and speakers' constructions of identity. Making use of interview data, she identifies speakers' emic perspectives on domains of use showing a perception of dialectal features being used more often in familial settings than in broader societal settings. In an interesting exploratory study, Jensen (2017) uses Google Trends to track large-scale trends in the use of the dialect labels "Geordie", "Scouse", and "Cockney" as search terms. She shows that such trends seem to reflect patterns in users' interests with users searching for "Geordie" only being interested in the show *Geordie Shore*, while users searching for "Scouse" being mainly interested in Liverpool, and users searching for "Cockney" are the only ones seemingly interested in the linguistic aspect of the dialect label in question. Importantly, Jensen (2017) lists both the advantages and limitations of using Google Trends in sociolinguistic research. Of course, issue 15 of *Globe* in its entirety is solidly planted in sociolinguistics with its thematic focus on language contact, and there are no less than two thematic sections in issue 12 dedicated to another sociolinguistic topic – namely, multilingualism.

Of course, this does not mean that these are the only areas of research covered in *Globe*. Take a look at the archives, and you will find topics ranging from Kantian grammar to anti-Muslim discourse strategies to the discourse of banking to West-African Pidgin English. Note also that there is an interdisciplinary undercurrent to most of the articles highlighted as examples above which is also found in the majority of articles published in the journal throughout its ten years of existence. For instance, Haugaard & Laursen (2021) and Jensen et al. (2016), while dealing with text-linguistic phenomena, draw on insights from the area of language and culture, with the latter also looking to pragmatics. Conversely, Amoakohene et al. (2024) is just as much a text-linguistic study as it is a study of the interplay between language and culture. Haugaard & Jensen (2020), while addressing a topic relating to language pedagogy, is anchored in stylistics, and Herrmann et al. (2017) in reality combines stylistics and sociolinguistics.

With its open access model, *Globe* offers its readers direct access to a plethora of peer-reviewed research that not only addresses multiple different phenomena but also provides a multitude of perspectives, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. And it is all there, available to anyone who is interested. *Globe* truly is the epitome of the democratization of information in academia.

What about tomorrow?

There is no denying that *Globe* remains an important channel for publication of quality research both nationally and internationally. *Globe* was born out of the chaos caused by the utter and complete failure of the BFI. Not only that, *Globe* has outlived the BFI. It has survived multiple organizational changes at Aalborg University and has in fact outlived all the institutional organizations it was originally associated with. The Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences no longer exist, having been merged into the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Department of Culture and Global Studies was absorbed into the Department of Culture and Learning. Even the Languages and Linguistics research group no longer exists as a separate entity as its members are now part of the research group Communication, Language, and Discourse.

It is truly remarkable that *Globe* has survived so many organizational changes, seeing that other journals, with longer histories, fell victim to similar circumstances. One tragic example is *RASK* which, anchored at the University of Southern Denmark, was discontinued in 2022. Its demise was a direct result of radical changes at the university which themselves were ultimately caused by the seemingly never-ending barrage of political reforms in the education and research sector.

Globe has shown extraordinary resilience in a volatile environment of constant restructuring and reform, both nationally and locally. I sincerely hope that Aalborg University will continue to support the journal because, as mentioned a couple of times above, it has become not only a nationally important publication channel but also a research channel with international reach. To me, *Globe* is a success story. Let's keep it that way! While, to quote Yoda, "difficult to see; always in motion is the future", one thing is for sure "more dumb decisions politicians will make" (that was me saying that, not Yoda), and so there will be a continued need for a journal like *Globe* many decades to come.

So, dear reader, please raise a metaphorical glass and join me in a metaphorical toast: here's to at least ten more years of *Globe*! "What are we drinking?", I hear you ask. Well, lemonade, of course – in the form of the articles within this very issue of *Globe*.

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Fornyelse og genanvendelse af forstærkere i dansk. Om hvorfor noget ikke bare kan være *vildt spændende* eller *smaddergodt* én gang for alle

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Abstract: This paper presents a study of two kinds of intensifiers in Danish, i.e., intensifying adverbs like *rigtig* (cf. *rigtig glad* 'really happy') and first compounding elements such as *super-* (cf. *superglad* 'super happy'). For languages that make use of intensifiers it is often observed that there is a steady recruitment of new candidates and a revitalization of earlier candidates for this function, processes known as renewal and recycling. In this paper, these processes are explained as a cyclical reflex of two of Levinson's Neogricean heuristics, namely the I-heuristic and the M-heuristic (Levinson 2000). Furthermore, it is shown that the literal semantics of elements recruited to the function of intensifier is of little, if any, importance; it is the mere fact that the recruits enter the morpho-syntactic matrix of intensifying constructions that prompts the function as intensifying element.

Keywords: forstærkere, gradsadverbier, sammensætninger, maksimer, universalpragmatik, dansk

1. Indledning

Fra tid til anden har man brugt det billede om sproget at det fungerer som et vindue eller en rude mellem os og virkeligheden; typisk lægger man slet ikke mærke til at det er der - man bruger det bare (jf. fx Andersen 1989: 4). Visse former for sproglige udtryk er dog ikke designet til en gennemsigtig og tilbagetrukken funktion, snarere tværtimod. Det gælder fx de udtryk der er emnet for denne artikel, nemlig to slags sproglige forstærkere: dels den slags som også går under betegnelsen gradsadverbial (som *vildt* i *vildt spændende*), dels den slags der bruges som første sammensætningsled i ord som *smaddergodt*. Semantisk-pragmatisk har de det til fælles at de ikke bidrager til det propositionelle indhold i en ytring, men i stedet fungerer som en subjektivt farvet vurdering af det de modificerer (jf. fx Jensen 2001; Claridge, Jonsson & Kytö 2024). I denne egenskab er deres raison d'être at vække opmærksomhed hos modtager.

I sprog som gør brug af forstærkere af den nævnte slags, kan man iagttage en stadig rekruttering af nye kandidater (jf. fx Bolinger 1972: 18; Nguyen & Rathje 2025), en proces der i engelsksproget litteratur kaldes fornyelse ("renewal", fx Tagliamonte 2008; Bordet 2017). Populært forklarer man behovet for nye forstærkere med at eksisterende forstærkere bliver "slidte" (Frans Gregersen i Mikkelsen 2015), at de efter nogen tid "mister deres 'bid'" (Jensen 2001: 201), og at man derfor har brug for nye kandidater der kan skabe den ønskede effekt, nemlig at vække opmærksomhed. Målet med nærværende artikel er at belyse denne påstand teoretisk, og til det er Levinsons (1995, 2000) neogriceanske tankegang nyttig. Inden vi kommer til den del der handler om universalpragmatik og maksimer, gøres der dog rede for de mere tekniske detaljer vedrørende morfosyntaks og semantik. Men allerførst skal det nævnes hvilke data der ligger til grund for analyserne i denne artikel.

2. Datagrundlag

Analyserne er baseret på det materiale man finder i eksisterende litteratur om forstærkere. Kernen i dette materiale udgøres af stoffet i de tre store dansksprogede ordbøger Ordbog over det danske Sprog, Nye ord i dansk 1955 til i dag og Den Danske Ordbog og de omfattende bagvedliggende samlinger af autentiske eksempler der knytter sig til dem. I hvert fald de redegørelser man kan læse hos Aa. Hansen (1967), Stopyra (1996), Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023) og Jarvad (1992, 1995), bygger direkte på disse resurser. Det materiale af autentiske eksempler fra realityserierne Big

Brother og Ex on the beach man finder hos Nguyen & Rathje (2025), indgår også i analyserne. Det samme gør sig gældende for det historiske materiale man finder hos Jensen (2001). Desuden er der blevet gjort brug af søgninger i et aviskorpus af regionale og landsdækkende aviser fra perioden 2005-2025 på cirka 6,7 mia. løbende ord og af egne løbende observationer.

3. Morfosyntaktiske og semantiske karakteristika

De sproglige størrelser der er emnet for denne artikel, falder i to morfosyntaktiske grupper som i første omgang kan karakteriseres ved at den ene (gruppe A) består af selvstændige ord der står som adled til et adjektiv eller et adverbium; den anden gruppe (B) udgøres af første sammensætningsled i sammensatte adjektiver/adverbier.

A
absurd, lidt, meget, ret, rigtig, vildt, ægte god[1] sang
absurd, lidt, meget, ret, rigtig, vildt, ægte godt sunget

B
drøngod, hammergod, megagod, psykopatgod, skidegod, smaddergod sang
drøngodt, hammergodt, megagodt, psykopatgodt, skidegodt, smaddergodt sunget

I gængse grammatiske fremstillinger behandles den første gruppe som adverbielle led, og i den udstrækning de betegnes med en undergruppebetegnelse, kaldes de gradsadverbialer (Lundskær-Nielsen & Holmes 2010: 383; Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 1020; Heltoft mfl. 2020: 10; Retskrivningsordbogen § 38 (3)). Den anden gruppe består af størrelser som udgør første sammensætningsled i sammensatte ord.

Sproglige forstærkere kan man også finde i andre morfosyntaktiske sammenhænge. Mange af ordene i gruppe A kan fx også bruges prædikativt, jf. *det er vildt*, og man kan føje et forstærkende første sammensætningsled til ord fra adskillige ordklasser foruden adjektiver og adverbier (gruppe B), således fx verber (*hundefryse*, *skrupgrine*) og substantiver (*møgvejr*, *svineheld*). Af hensyn til fremstillingen afgrænser redegørelsen i denne artikel sig dog til de to typer vist i A og B.

De to grupper har det til fælles at adverbial hhv. første sammensætningsled syntaktisk set er sekundære til en *kerne* der udgøres af a) et adjektiv eller et adverbium hhv. b) andet sammensætningsled (som kan fungere adjektivisk eller adverbielt); i eksemplificeringen ovenfor er leksemet *god/godt* brugt til at illustrere kernen. Morfosyntaktisk har gruppe A og gruppe B altså både ligheder og forskelle.

Semantisk-pragmatisk har de en del egenskaber til fælles. Om gradsadverbialer (gruppe A) skriver Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 1020) at de er karakteristiske ved at angive ”grad, intensitet eller mængde af den kvalitet der beskrives i et adjektiv eller i et mådesadverbial”. Noget tilsvarende gør sig gældende for første sammensætningsled i gruppe B; de bidrager til at angive intensiteten af det ord som de indgår i. Intensitet er altså en vigtig egenskab ved de størrelser som denne artikel handler om. I engelsksproget litteratur kaldes de *intensifiers* (Bolinger 1972), i den tysksprogede tradition *Verstärkungen* (Stopyra 1996). I denne artikel kaldes de *forstærkere*. En uheldig omstændighed ved denne term er at ordformen i sig selv antyder at noget bliver forstærket, hvilket kan synes kontraintuitivt i forbindelse med et ord som *lidt*, som jo snarere ’forsvager’, jf. fx *lidt* i *det er lidt*

[1] Af hensyn til fuldstændigheden bør det nævnes at formen *god* i utrum skyldes substantivet *sang*. Man ville selvfølgelig også kunne finde eksempler på neutrum, fx *vildt godt nummer.* Denne kommentar er relevant her såvel som i gruppe B (*smaddergod sang* : *smaddergodt nummer*) og de andre steder i artiklen hvor *(-)god(t)* bruges som illustrerende adjektiv.

lækkert. At bruge *forstærker* som fællesbetegnelse er dog i overensstemmelse med praksis i store dele af den dansksprogede tradition (fx Aa. Hansen 1967: 455-456, 460; E. Hansen 1967 [1973]; Jarvad 1992, 1995: 235-237; Lundskær-Nielsen & Holmes 2010: 623-624; Nguyen & Rathje 2025; se også redegørelsen i Becker-Christensen & Basbøll 2023).[2]

Det særlige ved forstærkere er at de er udtryk for en subjektiv tilkendegivelse fra afsenders side om størrelser der indgår på en graduerbar skala, snarere end en objektiv beskrivelse (se også E. Hansen 1970). Ved brugen af forstærkere angiver afsender graden af intensitet for det som et givet adjektiv betegner. Ved adjektiver som i forvejen er graduerbare og har en subjektiv valør, fx *god*, *dårlig*, *dejlig*, understøtter forstærkerne det graduerbare element, fx *vildt god*, *skidegod*. Men forstærkere kan faktisk også bevirke at størrelser som ellers tilsyneladende ikke er subjektive og graduerbare i sig selv, bliver netop det, jf. fx *vildt blå*, *skideblå*. I en klassisk artikel fra 1970 har Erik Hansen gjort rede for samspillet mellem skellet subjektiv : objektiv og de indbyrdes forhold mellem adled (forstærker) og kerne. Han viser blandt andet hvordan et umiddelbart objektivt adjektiv som *kommunal* kan blive subjektivt ved at man sammensætter det med en forstærker: *splitterkommunal*. Se også Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023: 65) og desuden Tagliamonte (2008) om tilsvarende mekanismer i engelsk.

Som vist karakteriserer man typisk forstærkere som størrelser der angiver graden af intensitet for det betegnende adjektiv. Dermed antydes det at der findes en skala med høj intensitet i den ene ende og lav intensitet i den anden. Dog viser det sig at en sådan skala skal forstås ret løseligt. Man kan måske nok komme frem til at *meget* betyder mere end *lidt* i en sætning som *den er meget* hhv. *lidt lækker*, men i praksis er det umuligt at placere de viste eksempler i gruppe A og B ovenfor på en skala hvor fx *vildt* betyder mere end *rigtig* (eller omvendt), og *hammer-* betyder mere end *skide-* (eller omvendt). Man skal altså ikke forstå det graduerbare alt for bogstaveligt. I stedet skal man se på de størrelser der bruges som forstærkere som subjektive tilkendegivelser der angiver en vis mængde engagement fra afsenders side.

Som nævnt i indledningen bidrager forstærkere ikke til det propositionelle indhold i den ytring de er en del af. Deri afviger de fra visse andre typer adverbialer (fx tids-, steds- og mådesadverbialer, jf. (1)-(3), og andre (beskrivende) adjektiver, jf. (4)-(6).

(1) Manden var i grundlovsforhør **i går** eftermiddag ved Retten i Næstved (Berlingske 2017)
(2) Jeg stod **derovre** (Berlingske 2019)
(3) her vinder sprogfolk og andre humanister **hastigt** frem (Berlingske 2011)
(4) Faconen er **trekantet** (Weekendavisen 2013)
(5) jeg er **madglad** (Jyllands-Posten 2010)
(6) kjolen er **sort** (Kristeligt Dagblad 2014)

I (1)-(6) fungerer adverbialer hhv. adjektiver på propositionelt niveau, hvilket blandt andet viser sig ved at de kan anfægtes, fx ved hjælp af en negation eller et antonym, jf. (1')-(6').

(1') Manden var ikke i grundlovsforhør **i går** eftermiddag, men **i dag**
(2') Jeg stod ikke **derovre**, men **herovre**
(3') her vinder sprogfolk og andre humanister **langsomt** frem
(4') Faconen er ikke **trekantet**
(5') jeg er ikke **madglad**

[2] Samme praksis finder man ved det engelske *intensifier*. Bolingers (1972: 17) overordnede kategori af "intensifiers" omfatter også 'forsvagere': "I use the term *intensifier* for any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two". Intensifiers inddeles hos ham i fire undertyper: *boosters*, *compromisers*, *diminishers* og *minimizers*.

(6') kjolen er **hvid**

Eksemplerne i (1')-(6') modsiger det propositionelle indhold i (1)-(6). Fx korrigeres *i går* til *i dag* og *sort* til *hvid*. Noget tilsvarende er ikke muligt for de størrelser der er emnet for denne artikel. Hvis man ved dem anfægter noget ved hjælp af et antonym eller en negation, berører det ikke den propositionelle betydning af en given forstærker. I (7) kan man ikke anfægte forstærkeren *sindssygt* med *tilregneligt*, og hvis man negerer (8), er det ikke forstærkeren *skide-*, men hele ordet *skidegodt* man anfægter.

(7) det bliver sindssygt godt (Stevnsbladet 2025)
(7') det bliver *tilregneligt godt
(8) Det er skidegodt gået af os alle (Dagbladet Køge 2014)
(8') Det er ikke skidegodt gået

Teknisk sagt fungerer adverbier og første sammensætningsled i (1)-(6) på propositionelt niveau, mens de der vises i (7) og (8), fungerer på et andet niveau.

Hvad angår gruppe B, dvs. typen med forstærkende første sammensætningsled, viser dette sig blandt andet ved at det forstærkende første sammensætningsled ikke specificerer kernen, men alene angiver grad eller intensitet, jf. (9), hvor alle de sammensatte ord kan parafraseres til *meget god*.

(9) drøngod, hammergod, megagod, skidegod, smaddergod ~ meget god

I den henseende adskiller de sig fra prototypiske sammensætninger som (4)-(5) ovenfor, hvor første sammensætningsled specificerer indholdet af andet sammensætningsled, jf. (10)-(11) og yderligere (12)-(13).

(10) trekantet – 'som har tre kanter'
(11) madglad – 'som er glad for mad'
(12) lyseblå – 'som har en lys nuance af blå'
(13) halvåben – 'som er halvt åben'

En ofte observeret omstændighed ved sammensætninger med forstærkende førsteled vedrører trykfordelingen på de to sammensætningsled. Hvor prototypiske sammensætninger i dansk har en struktur med hovedtryk og bitryk, fx *ˈlyse,blå* og *ˈhalv,åben*, har sammensætninger med forstærkende førsteled to hovedtryk, et på hvert sammensætningsled, fx *ˈpaveˈstolt* og *ˈsplitterˈgal* (E. Hansen 1967 [1973]: 115; Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 263; Andersen 2014; Petersen mfl. 2021: 109; Becker-Christensen & Basbøll 2023: 63[3]).

De semantisk-syntaktiske sammenhænge er afgørende for en given størrelses funktion som forstærker. For begge gruppers vedkommende kan dette skildres som en slags matrice med pladser til forstærkere.

For gruppe A's vedkommende drejer det sig om funktionen som gradsadverbial (som altid står umiddelbart til venstre for kernen, dvs. det adjektiv eller adverbial det modificerer). Kandidater som egner sig til gruppe A, begynder typisk deres tilværelse som leksemer med objektivt indhold, og i

[3] Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023) behandler også sammensætninger af typerne *svineheld* og *møgvejr*. Typen repræsenteret ved *svineheld* har samme trykfordeling som de sammensætninger der er emnet for nærværende artikel, altså to hovedtryk: *ˈsvineˈheld*, hvorimod typen repræsenteret ved *møgvejr* har en anden trykfordeling, nemlig hovedtryk - bitryk: *ˈmøg,vejr*. Da andet sammensætningsled og dermed hele ordet i de to typer ikke er adjektiver, falder de dog udenfor rammerne af denne artikel.

mange sammenhænge bliver de netop brugt i en mere eller mindre objektiv betydning. Når et ord som *vild* lægger sig til et substantiv som i syntagmet *et vildt dyr*, kan det have to tolkninger. Det kan betyde 'vildt' som opposition til 'tamt', 'ikke tæmmet' - det kunne fx gælde en løve eller en giraf i modsætning til fx tamme dyr som køer og hunde. Eller det kan være en subjektiv tilkendegivelse a la 'jeg synes det her dyr er uforståeligt, imponerende, overvældende'. Historisk går den objektive betydning forud for den subjektive. Sådan forholder det sig altså når et ord som *vildt* lægger sig til et substantiv. Når det derimod lægger sig til et adjektiv/adverbium, er det altid subjektivt, jf. *vildt god sang/vildt godt sunget*.

For gruppe B's vedkommende drejer det sig om den åbne plads i begyndelsen af ordet, som altid kan udfyldes af et førsteled. Her sættes funktionen som forstærker i sving ved at der er en semantisk-pragmatisk inkompatibilitet mellem førsteleddet og andetleddet, fx er en objektiv beskrivende tolkning af *skæppe* og *skøn* i *skæppeskøn* ikke oplagt. Dette uddybes i afsnit 10. Den subjektive funktion understøttes i øvrigt af det særlige trykmønster med hovedtryk på begge led, jf. *ˈskæppeˈskøn*, ikke *ˈskæppe,skøn*.

I begge tilfælde er der altså en forstærkerplads til venstre for kernen. Denne plads er dels ret konkret idet den indgår i det lineære forløb i en ytring, dels mere abstrakt forstået som 'en plads der kan bringes i spil til subjektive tilkendegivelser'.

4. Inventar og rekruttering

For begge gruppers vedkommende (A og B) kan man iagttage et meget stort inventar, og der rekrutteres hele tiden nye medlemmer. Som eksempler på adverbielle forstærkere (gruppe A) kan nævnes *forfærdelig*, *forholdsvis*, *frygtelig*, *ganske*, *grotesk*, *helt*, *lidt*, *meget*, *overmåde*, *ret*, *rigtig*, *rimelig*, *særdeles*, *temmelig*, *uhyggelig*, *umådelig*, *urimelig*, *vildt*, *virkelig* (jf. Jensen 2001: 199).

Hvad angår forstærkende førsteled (gruppe B), opremser Aa. Hansen (1967: 455-456, 460) på få sider over 20 kandidater, heriblandt *drøn-*, *bund-*, *edder-*, *hunde-*, *knippel-*, *knokkel-*, *lud-*, *møg-*, *pløk-*, *skum-*, *snot-*, *stok-*, *svine-*, *tude-*. E. Hansen (1967 [1973]) nævner førsteled som *abe-*, *blik-*, *kiste-*, *kæmpe-*, *pave-*, *smæk-*, *torske-*. Pia Jarvad (1992, 1995: 235-237) opregner også en stor mængde: *død-*, *brand-*, *hammer-*, *herre-*, *knippel-*, *lorte-*, *mega-*, *pisse-*, *røv-*, *skide-*, *skæppe-*, *splitter-*, *stok-*. Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023) fremlægger lister på over 150 mere eller mindre produktive forstærkende førsteled; foruden de allerede oplistede kan nævnes *dyng-*, *gennem-*, *himmel-*, *hyper-*, *kanon-*, *knald-*, *pære-* og *skrup-*. Nguyen & Rathje (2025) har også mange af de allerede nævnte sammensætningsled på deres lister og føjer desuden nyere kandidater, fx *psykopat-* (jf. det autentiske *psykopatgod krop*), til.

Gruppe A rekrutterer først og fremmest fra leksemer der i forvejen har en tilværelse som adjektiv eller adverbium; i moderne ordbøger og grammatikker kan man netop finde dem klassificeret som en af disse to ordklasser. Det varierer fra fremstilling til fremstilling hvordan de enkelte ord klassificeres. I den gældende udgave af Retskrivningsordbogen er de fleste ord i (14) nedenfor fx klassificeret som adjektiver.[4] Det gælder også *meget* (som man finder under adjektivet *megen*) og *lidt*. Anderledes skriver Lundskær-Nielsen & Holmes (2010: 383) om ord som *meget* og *lidt* at skønt de historisk set er afledt af adjektiver, bliver de ikke mere opfattet som sådanne; i stedet er de adverbielle leksemer i egen ret. I Den Danske Ordbog er de fleste ord i (14) klassificeret som adjektiver, men nogle af dem, fx *ret* og *lidt*, behandles som selvstændige opslagsord og klassificeres som adverbier.

[4] Af ordene i (14) er kun *ganske* og *temmelig* klassificeret som adverbier.

(14) Eksempler på forstærkere fra gruppe A

Hvad angår gruppe B, er det lidt vanskeligere at pege på en eller to oplagte rekrutteringsordklasser.

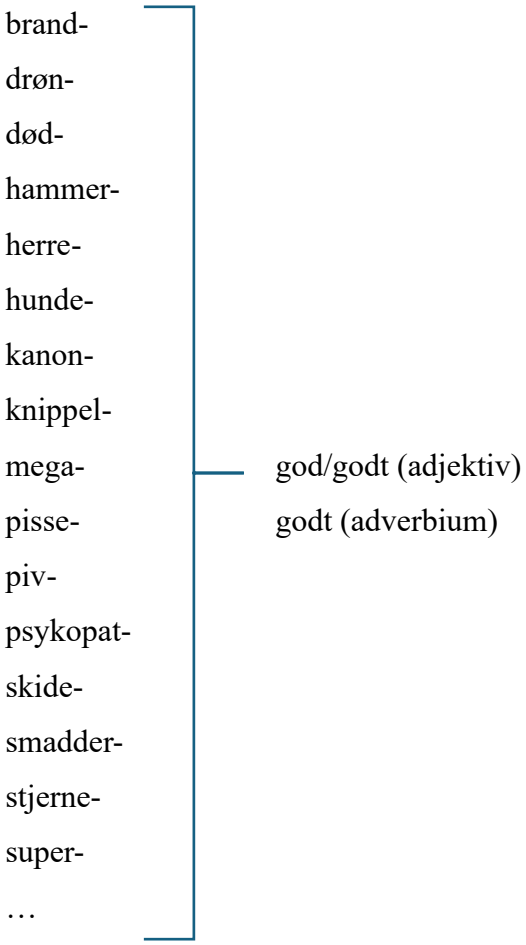
Aage Hansen disponerer sin redegørelse for forstærkende førsteled (og andre førsteled) ud fra en ordklasseinddeling, hvorved ord som *dødkedelig* og *lyngod* lander i gruppen af sammensætninger ”med substantiv som første led” og *drønstærk* og *skideangst* i gruppen af sammensætninger ”med verbum som første led” (Aa. Hansen 1967: 455-456 og 460). E. Hansen (1967 [1973]: 114) skriver at første sammensætningsled af den forstærkende type ”især” kommer fra ”navneord”. Janusz Stopyra (1996) laver detaljerede oversigter over hvilke ordklasser hhv. første og andet sammensætningsled kommer fra. Fx er *drønstærk* og *pjaskvåd* ifølge ham dannet af verbum + adj./adv., og *dødssikker* og *hønefuld* er dannet af substantiv + adj./adv.

Andre er mere tilbageholdende med at udnævne ’oprindelsesordklasser’ for de første sammensætningsled. Det gælder fx Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023), som ikke forsøger sig med noget sådant. I stedet antydes det i flere fremstillinger at de pågældende orddele er en slags præfikser; det gælder fx Jarvad (1992: 235-237) og Basbøll (2005: 512). Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023: 66) nævner uden specifik reference at man kan finde termen ”præfiksoid” brugt i litteraturen. Lundskær-Nielsen & Holmes (2010: 623-624) klassificerer dem uden videre som præfikser, hvorved en evt. ordklasseklassificering af første sammensætningsled bliver redundant; på deres liste over ”amplifying prefixes” finder man blandt andet *aller-*, *drøn-*, *død-*, *hunde-*, *skide-*, *stjerne-* og *super-*.

I denne artikel behandles de aktuelle orddele som sammensætningsled, men af en række grunde der har med orddannelse i dansk at gøre, anses det for omsonst at forsøge at klassificere dem med hensyn til ordklasse.

I de fleste tilfælde er det umuligt at afgøre hvilken ordklasse et givet første sammensætningsled kunne være rekrutteret fra. Stammer *død* i *dødlækker* fx fra adjektivet *død* eller substantivet *død*? Men problemet rækker videre end homonymer som *død* (adj.) : *død* (sb.). I sammensætninger som *knaldgodt* og *drønvarmt* er det ikke til at afgøre om *knald-* og *drøn-* er substantiverne *knald* og *drøn* eller stammen af verberne *knalde* og *drøne*. Man kan ikke tage kortformen (altså fx *knald* snarere end *knalde* og *drøn* snarere end *drøne*) som belæg for at der må være tale om substantiver og ikke verber, for på dansk kan man sagtens udelade opslagsformens finale *-e* når man laver sammensætninger, jf. *billede* og *billedskøn*. Omvendt kan man ikke afgøre om første sammensætningsled i ord som *skideflot* og *svinedumt* er substantiverne *skid* og *svin* eller verberne *skide* og *svine*, for det *-e-* som står umiddelbart foran andet sammensætningsled, kunne være en del af første sammensætningsled, eller det kunne være et såkaldt fugeelement.[5]

(15) Eksempler på forstærkere fra gruppe B



[5] De to mest almindelige fugeelementer på moderne dansk er *-e-*, som i *torskedum*, og *-s-*, som dog ikke ser ud til at være særlig brugt i sammensætninger med forstærkere, jf. oversigten i Becker-Christensen & Basbøll (2023: 88-101), hvor eneste eksempler er *døds-* og *dødsens-* som i *dødssyg* og *dødsensalvorlig*. I andre sammensætninger er *-s-* forholdsvis almindeligt, fx *arbejdsløs* og *fremgangsrig*.

Alt dette skyldes at det som bruges som første sammensætningsled, ikke er et ord i traditionel forstand, dvs. noget betydningsindhold der er presset i form til at passe ind i en ordklasse (jf. Jensen 2016), men i stedet det mere amorfe indhold som en ordstamme indeholder.

5. Diakroni

I den udstrækning forstærkere gøres til genstand for historisk omtale, er der især to vinkler på stoffet. Den ene består i en interesse for at finde udviklingsvejen for de enkelte leksikalske størrelser, evt. samlet i grupper af størrelser med fælles træk og sammenlignelige udviklingsveje. Det er primært gruppe A der gøres til genstand for den slags undersøgelser, og man finder dem også for sprog der ikke er dansk; der er mange for tysk, fransk og engelsk, og de er tit indlejret i internationale studier om grammatikalisering (se fx Claudi 2006 og Ørsnes 2022 om tysk, Kunkel 2024 om fransk og Méndez-Naya (ed.) 2008 og Bordet 2017 om engelsk samt referencer i de pågældende værker). Typisk viser man hvordan der er en bevægelse fra noget konkret og objektivt til noget mere abstrakt og subjektivt (fx Jensen 2001), og man bruger nogle gange termen *delexicalisation* om den proces der leder frem til at fx engelsk *very* går fra at betyde 'ægte', 'sand' til at betyde 'meget' (Tagliamonte 2008).

Den type studier er knap så hyppige for gruppe B's vedkommende,[6] men i dansksprogede sammenhænge finder man dog antydninger af en interesse for de historiske udviklinger af det semantiske (dog sjældent som studier der har dette emne som primær prioritet); fx kan *hønefuld* anses for at være en billedlig anvendelse hvor man sammenligner nogens fuldskab med hvordan en høne ville være fuld, og man ville kunne parafrasere det pågældende udtryk med *fuld som en høne* (se fx Aa. Hansen 1967: 455). Billedlig anvendelse af nævnte type og andre (fx *dødkedelig*) kan så danne afsæt for udvidet brug hvor "ordene [blot] kommer til at betegne … en høj intensitet", hvorved man kan få dannelser som *dødspændende* mv. (E. Hansen 1967 [1973]).

Den anden historiske vinkel på stoffet angår det faktum at der er en stadig tilstrømning af nye kandidater til både gruppe A og gruppe B. En proces som i denne artikel kaldes fornyelse (*renewal*) og - som det vil fremgå - genanvendelse af gammelt materiale (*recycling*). Observationen at der hele tiden rekrutteres kandidater til forstærkerfunktionen, er gammel. Bolinger (1972: 18) beskriver fænomenet således:

> They are the chief means of emphasis for speakers for whom all means of emphasis quickly grow stale and need to be replaced.

Bolinger støtter denne påstand med et citat fra Cornelis Stoffel (1901):

> The process is always going on, so that new words are in constant requisition, because the old ones are felt to be inadequate to the expression ... of a quality to the very highest degree of which it is capable.

Behovet for fornyelse af ordforrådet i de pågældende grupper kan anskueliggøres ved hjælp af begreber fra pragmatikken. Dette handler de næste afsnit om.

[6] Forskellen på den interesse hhv. gruppe A og gruppe B er blevet mødt med, skyldes formodentlig at typen i gruppe B ikke i særlig høj grad bruges i engelsk (jf. dog substantivsammensætninger som *shitload*). Hvor gruppe A-konstruktioner og deres udviklingsprocesser kan ses i en lang række romanske og germanske sprog (inkl. engelsk), er det typisk de germanske sprog (ekskl. engelsk) der gør brug af gruppe B-konstruktioner.

6. Mening og maksimer

Hverdagssprogsfilosoffer som Austin, Searle og Grice formåede at vise systematikken i og mellemregningerne for hvordan vi gør os forståelige, selv hvis det vi ytrer, ikke umiddelbart er strengt logisk i formel forstand. Til det projekt bidrog Grice (1975) med den indsigt at vi tilsyneladende navigerer efter et overordnet princip kaldet *samarbejdsprincippet* efter hvilket vi gør os umage for at forstå ikke bare betydningen af men også meningen med det der ytres. Til samarbejdsprincippet er der knyttet en række maksimer. Påstanden er at vi ideelt set går ud fra at de folk vi kommunikerer med, ikke siger hverken mere eller mindre end nødvendigt i forhold til det overordnede formål med ytringen (kvantitetsmaksimet), at de taler sandt (kvalitetsmaksimet), at flere ytringer op ad hinanden giver mening i forhold til hinanden (relationsmaksimet), og at det ytrede er klart og velordnet (mådesmaksimet).

Siden Grice har mange forskere arbejdet videre med samarbejdsprincippet og maksimerne. Særlig relevant i forbindelse med emnet for nærværende artikel er Levinsons (1995, 2000) arbejder med kvantitetsmaksimet og mådesmaksimet (se også Nielsen 2005, 2010). Hos Grice lyder de pågældende maksimer således:

> ***Kvantitetsmaksimet***
> Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
> Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
>
> ***Mådesmaksimet***
> Avoid obscurity of expression.
> Avoid ambiguity.
> Be brief.
> Be orderly.

Inspireret af disse har Levinson formuleret følgende to maksimer (eller heuristikker, som han kalder dem):[7]

> ***The I-heuristic*** ("I" står for "informativeness")
> What is simply described is stereotypically exemplified.
>
> ***The M-heuristic*** ("M" står for "manner")
> What is said in an abnormal way, isn't normal.

Levinson (1995, 2000: 39) illustrerer blandt andet sine to maksimer ved hjælp af to forskellige måder at formulere at en person ("Bill") stopper en bil på:[8]

(16) "Bill stopped the car" (by I) +> 'in the stereotypical manner with the foot pedal'
(17) "Bill caused the car to stop" (by M) +> 'indirectly, not in the normal way, e.g. by use of the emergency brake'

[7] Terminologien er ikke fuldstændig enslydende i Levinson 1995, 2000, Nielsen 2005, 2010. Det skyldes at begge forskere har arbejdet sig frem til hvilke termer der kunne være mest dækkende for de pågældende maksimer, ikke at der er grundlæggende uenighed i det indholdsmæssige. *The I-heuristic* og *the M-heuristic* er de termer der bruges i Levinson 2000. Også den præcise måde maksimerne formuleres på, varierer en smule; igen skyldes det ikke grundlæggende uenigheder i det indholdsmæssige. I denne artikel er ordlyden citeret efter Levinson 2000: 32, 33. Se i øvrigt også redegørelsen i Jensen 2012.

[8] Notationen +> i de to eksempler bruger Levinson (og Nielsen 2005, 2010) til at angive såkaldte "standardinferenser", dvs. den *implikatur* (eller *underforståelse*) en given formuleringsmåde pr. standard lægger op til.

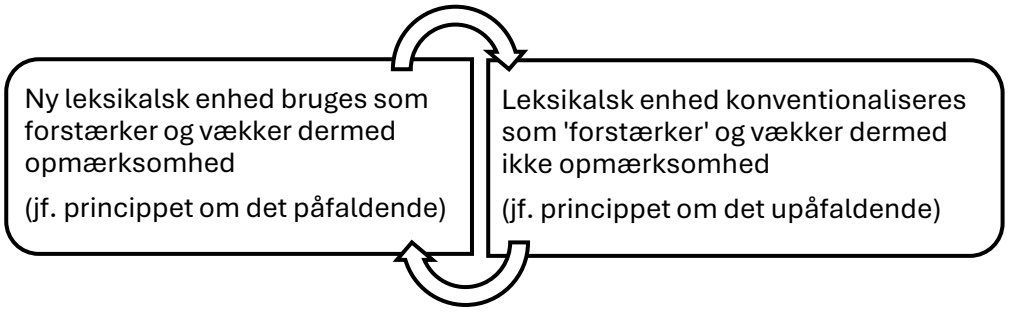
I (16) bliver begivenheden skildret på en upåfaldende måde, og derfor går man ud fra at der ikke er nogen særlige omstændigheder knyttet til den måde Bill stoppede bilen på. I (17) skildres begivenheden i stedet på en påfaldende måde. Selve det at formuleringen ikke følger den almindelige standard (den stereotype måde vist i (16)), gør at man som modtager får mistanke om at der er noget usædvanligt på spil. Principielt kunne både (16) og (17) ytres om en situation hvor Bill havde kørt bilen ind i et træ, men mange ville nok undre sig hvis en sådan situation blev omtalt som i (16).[9]

Levinsons to maksimer kan på dansk omdøbes til *princippet om det påfaldende* og *princippet om det upåfaldende*, og de kan bruges til at anskueliggøre de processer der ligger bag vores stadige rekruttering af nye forstærkerkandidater.

7. En cyklus med en indbygget annulleringsmekanisme

Meningen med forstærkere er at de (foruden at udtrykke afsenders subjektive vurdering) skal vække modtagers opmærksomhed. Vi finder hele tiden nye kandidater til denne funktion, og nye kandidater kan blive meget populære, netop fordi de - i og med at de er nye - har den ønskede effekt. Problemet er dog at effekten at vække opmærksomhed fortager sig med brug. Jo mere forstærkere bliver brugt, jo hurtigere bliver de konventionaliseret som sproglige størrelser der står til venstre for et adjektiv/adverbium eller fungerer som første sammensætningsled, dvs. 'pladsholdere' uden den intenderede modtagereffekt. De bliver altså 'forstærkere' af navn mere end af gavn. At et udtryk er blevet konventionaliseret, er en anden måde at sige at det er blevet stereotypt (jf. Levinson) på, og dermed har det ikke længere den effekt at skabe opmærksomhed. Det er tværtimod blevet ret upåfaldende, og derfor bliver man nødt til at finde nye kandidater til erstatning. Disse nye kandidater har så en stund den ønskede effekt - at være påfaldende og vække opmærksomhed - men lider samme skæbne som tidligere forstærkere. Denne bevægelse er cyklisk: En ny kandidat vækker opmærksomhed (jf. princippet om det påfaldende), bliver efter nogen tid velkendt i sprogsamfundet (konventionaliseret) og vækker dermed ikke mere samme opmærksomhed (jf. princippet om det upåfaldende), hvorpå der opstår et behov for en ny kandidat osv., osv. Dette kan illustreres som i figur 1.

Figur 1. Den cykliske bevægelse for forstærkere



Det er det der ligger i formuleringen at de pågældende leksikalske enheder bliver 'slidte' og mister deres egenskab som opmærksomhedsskabere. I rekrutteringen og brugen af forstærkere er der simpelthen en indbygget annulleringsmekanisme.

[9] I (17) bliver det i øvrigt ikke specificeret hvad det usædvanlige kunne være; det må man som modtager selv finde ud af.

8. Intentionalitet og mangel på samme

En krumtap i Grices teori om *implikatur* - på dansk også kaldet *underforstået mening*[10] - er intentionalitet. Underforstået mening etableres ved at afsender intentionelt bryder med maksimerne på forskellig vis for derved at sige noget andet eller mere end det der udtrykkes rent denotativt. Nielsen (2010: 129) formulerer det på følgende måde:

> Når maksimerne åbenlyst brydes, går vi med det samme i gang med at prøve at inferere hvordan ytringen alternativt kan forstås.

Når afsenderen af (17) åbenlyst bryder mådesmaksimet og kvantitetsmaksimet ved at udtrykke sig alt for omstændeligt og med alt for mange ord, går modtager i gang med at finde ud af om der er en underforstået mening, og i givet fald hvad den går ud på. På engelsk omtales fænomenet som ”flouting” (Grice 1975: 208-209; Thomas 1995: 65-72).

Implikaturer opstår altså ved tilsigtede brud på maksimerne. Brud kan dog også ske utilsigtet. Fx kan man i en samtale have misforstået hvad der blev sagt, og derfor svare noget der ikke giver mening, uden at der derfor skal ledes efter en underforstået mening. Dette fænomen kaldes ”infringing” (Grice 1975; Thomas 1995: 74; Mbisike 2021). Man kan også uforvarende komme til at bruge udtryksmåder som får en modtager til at lede efter en underforstået mening skønt det ikke var meningen. Hvis man til sin partner siger *der er ikke mere mælk*, behøver det ikke at indebære en underforstået bebrejdelse af partneren for ikke at have sørget for mælk; det kan bare være en konstatering.

Vi er afskåret fra at se ind i andre folks hoveder, og dermed er intentionalitet selvfølgelig et vanskeligt begreb at arbejde med. Dog er det relevant i forbindelse med forstærkere og princippet om det påfaldende på forskellig vis. I *princippet om det påfaldende*, som det er skildret i afsnit 7 ovenfor, udgør intentionalitet et vigtigt element. Intentionen er at vække modtagers opmærksomhed ved at insistere på at intensiteten i den brugte forstærker menes alvorligt.

9. Forstærkere som gruppemarkører og som tidstypiske tegn

Dermed bevæger vi os videre til en anden relevant omstændighed ved forstærkere. Eftersom de bruges som midler til at vække opmærksomhed, er det ikke sjældent at forstærkere bruges som gruppesprogsmarkører. Hans Peters (1994: 271) udtrykker det således:[11]

> One reason for the ever-continuing change regarding boosters[12] can be seen in a “taste for hyperbolic expression” in language: speakers desire to be “original”, to demonstrate their verbal skills, and to capture the attention of their audience. In addition, boosters frequently function as symbols of group identification. The knowledge and use of a particular booster often signals in-group membership. When the use of that booster spreads to other groups in the speech community, the word loses its function of group identification, and the linguistic “trend-setters” will then normally put a new groups-symbol into circulation. Such shibboleths thus tend to change rapidly; they are subject to fashion.

Som Peters bemærker, kan der gå mode i de enkelte forstærkere, men som ved alle andre

[10] Se fx Brink 1981, Togeby 1993: 492, Jensen 2012.

[11] Bemærk at Peters henviser til behovet for at vække opmærksomhed som det primære (jf. princippet om det påfaldende) og funktionen som gruppemarkør som sekundær i forhold hertil.

[12] Peters’ karakteristik er særligt møntet på såkaldte *boostere*, jf. fodnote 2, men jeg vil hævde at karakteristikken gælder for forstærkere som helhed.

modefænomener kan de udtryk der på et givet tidspunkt er moderne, med tiden blive umoderne. Dermed kan nogle forstærkere fremstå som særligt tidstypiske. Dette er en ofte gjort observation.

Pia Jarvad (1995: 235-237) skriver at nogle gruppe B-ord hører til tiden efter 2. verdenskrig, nogle især til 1960'erne, nogle til tiden omkring 1990. I Andersen, Jensen & Rathje (2025) nævnes *plim-* (som i *plimrådden*) og *kodylt* (som i *kodylt orange*) som tidstypiske for hhv. 1950'erne og 1970'erne. Hovedsigtet med Nguyen & Rathjes artikel (2025) er netop at undersøge hvordan forstærkere er tidstypiske og kan placeres tidsmæssigt i forhold til hinanden. Tagliamonte (2008) gør noget tilsvarende for *pretty*, *really*, *so* og *very* i torontoengelsk og viser blandt andet at de nævnte forstærkere indbyrdes skifter plads med hensyn til popularitet (frekvens) i tidsmæssigt perspektiv - at der altså ikke kun er tale om at nyt erstatter gammelt, men også at eksisterende forstærkere kan blive "recycled" og genvinde popularitet. Erik Hansens fremstilling fra 1967 (genoptrykt i 1973) nævner *abeskønt* som et ord af tiden og *knippel-* som en modeforstærker fra en tidligere tid.

Dermed er der ofte et overlap mellem forstærkere og slang, se fx Jørgensen & Quist (2008: 90, 94-96), som i deres karakteristik af slang blandt andet inkluderer forstærkeren *herre-*. Eller sagt på en anden måde: Forstærkere kan indgå i inventaret af slangudtryk.

Eftersom nogle forstærkere er stærkt tidstypiske, kan man faktisk komme til at vække opmærksomhed på en måde som måske ikke var intenderet. I sin fremstilling fra 1967 omtaler Erik Hansen at han i sin skoletid havde en lærer der brugte *knippel-* på en måde som Hansen og hans skolekammerater syntes var mærkelig, nemlig i sammensætningen *knippelvigtig*.[13] Senere som sprogforsker fandt Hansen ud af at *knippel-* som forstærkende førsteled engang havde været ret produktivt. Med henvisning til hvad man kan finde i "ordbøgerne", nævner Hansen (1967: 115) *knippelhård*, *-stærk*, *-dyr*, *-uforskammet*, *-fuld*, *-sikker*, og i Ordbog over det danske Sprog under opslagsordet *Knippel-*, betydning 2, finder man ganske rigtigt eksempler på disse sammensætninger, heriblandt (18) og (19).

(18) Stedet (blev) efterhaanden mindre morsomt . . og saa var der knippeldyrt. (Rosenkrantz "Amors Gerninger" 1925)
(19) (han) fik de fire Soldater smidt ud under Paaskud af, at de var menige! Er det nu ikke knippeluforskammet? (Berlingske Tidende 1921)

På Hansens tid og senere ser man funktionen som forstærkende førsteled afspejlet i leksikaliserede udtryk som *knippelfin* og *knippelgod*. Men da Hansen var skoleelev (formodentlig i 1940'erne[14]), var *knippel-* ikke produktivt. Dermed kom læreren ved at bruge *knippelvigtig* ganske vist til at vække opmærksomhed, men på en måde som næppe var tilsigtet, nemlig som en person der ikke var ajour med hvad der på det tidspunkt var standardinventar på forstærkerområdet, og som måske heller ikke var i en position til at fungere som "linguistic "trend-setter"" (jf. Peters) for unge skoledrenge.

10. Ikke glidende overgange, men ryk

I klassiske grammatikaliseringsstudier bliver det typisk påvist hvordan en given leksikalsk størrelse eller en given grammatisk konstruktion forandrer sig på en måde som giver mening for de samtidige sprogbrugere, en forandring som sprogbrugerne på det pågældende tidspunkt knap nok lægger mærke til. Som eksempel kan nævnes ordet *evakuere*. Ifølge Ordbog over det danske Sprog er det dannet af orddelene *ex* 'ud af' og *vacuare* 'tømme', og man finder det tidligst brugt om situationer hvor noget tømmes eller ryddes. Man kan fx evakuere et område for mennesker eller sine lunger for slim. Den brug der handler om at tømme eller rydde et område for mennesker, kan med tiden komme til at blive

[13] Hansen (1967: 115) skriver direkte: "Det grinede vi ad".
[14] Erik Hansen blev født i 1931.

associeret med selve de personer der fjernes fra det pågældende område, formodentlig fordi det ikke er ualmindeligt at bruge en betegnelse for en lokalitet som betegnelse for de folk der befinder sig på den pågældende lokalitet, jf. (20), hvor *butikken* kan forstås som 'de mennesker der befinder sig i butikken'.

(20) En medarbejder i Løvbjerg kunne samtidig oplyse, at den automatiske brandalarm var gået, og at det var årsagen til, at butikken blev evakueret. (JydskeVestkysten 2025)

Således opstår en ny betydning hvor *evakuere* kan bruges om at redde nogen fra et farligt sted. Ordbog over det danske Sprog anfører eksempler på denne brug fra 1940'erne. I moderne dansk lever de to betydninger af *evakuere* side om side, jf. (20) og (21).

(21) Fire borgere er allerede blevet evakueret fra Kina. (Jyllands-Posten 2020)

Denne udvikling er sket langsomt og på en måde som kan forklares som en mulig og meningsfuld (ny) tolkning af noget eksisterende materiale.

Anderledes forholder det sig med forstærkere. Hvor den slags sprogforandring der netop er blevet illustreret med *evakuere*, typisk finder sted ved (næsten) umærkelige processer, er rekrutteringen af nye forstærkere tydeligt mærkbar og skal netop være det.

Det man sætter på forstærkerens plads (i gruppe A såvel som B), bevirker at det samlede udtryk påkalder sig opmærksomhed. Det kan ske på forskellige måder. Man kan fx, jf. *abeskøn* og *hønefuld*, etablere et mærkeligt billede: Hvad vil det sige at være skøn på en abeagtig måde, og hvor tit har man egentlig set en fuld høne? En særlig afart af dette er at sammenstille ord som i deres bogstavelige betydning er indbyrdes inkompatible: Hvordan kan noget være *pænt grimt*? og *rimelig urimeligt*? Eksempler som disse forbryder sig mod de underpunkter i mådesmaksimet som handler om at man skal udtrykke sig klart og velordnet (avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be orderly). Dermed kan man ikke tage dem alvorligt i bogstavelig forstand, men bliver i stedet foranlediget til at lede alternativt efter meningen med de pågældende måder at udtrykke sig på.

Men det ikke-velordnede rækker langt udover eksempler som disse. For gruppe A's vedkommende er der i selve den semantisk-syntaktiske funktion som gradsadverbial indbygget et element af ikke-bogstavelighed som påvirker hvad som helst man bruger i denne funktion, jf. den engelske term *delexicalisation* nævnt i afsnit 5. Dermed er det også i et vist omfang ligegyldigt hvilken størrelse man placerer på denne plads; selve det at det står hvor det gør, og har den semantisk-syntaktiske funktion det har, bevirker at man som modtager leder efter en alternativ mening til den bogstavelige som leksemet kunne have båret. Denne mening er i stedet knyttet til afsenders subjektive vurdering af det som et adjektiv/adverbium betegner. Gruppe A rekrutterer først og fremmest fra ord som i forvejen fungerer som adjektiver/adverbier, jf. (14). For gruppe B's vedkommende er det i endnu højere grad end ved gruppe A tydeligt at rekruttens bogstavelige betydning er ret ligegyldig. Dette understøttes formodentlig af at første sammensætningsled ikke er et ord i gængs forstand og ikke tilhører en ordklasse, jf. afsnit 4 og (15), men i stedet er noget mere amorft.

11. Mere om rekruttering, fornyelse og genanvendelse

Nogle forstærkere (især type B) er tilsyneladende begrænset i deres kombinationsmuligheder. I moderne dansk anno 2025 kombineres forstærkeren *pære-* stort set kun med *-dansk*, *-let* og *-nem* (*pæredansk*, *pærelet*, *pærenem*). Tilsvarende kombineres *knippel-* nærmest kun med *-fin* og *-god* (*knippelfin*, *knippelgod*), jf. afsnit 9. Dog viser disse tilsyneladende begrænsninger sig ikke at holde for en nærmere efterprøvelse. Principielt kan man nemlig altid danne en kombination man ikke har brugt før, fx *pærevarm* eller *knippelinteressant*, og på grund af forstærkersystemets særlige

egenskaber vil sådanne nydannelser da skabe opmærksomhed.

Går man tilbage i historien, viser det sig at nogle af de forstærkere som nu kun bruges i ganske få kombinationer, tidligere har haft større udbredelse, at de med andre ord tidligere har været produktive; i afsnit 9 omtaltes det forstærkende førsteled *knippel-*. Et andet eksempel er *lud-*, som i moderne dansk stort set kun bliver brugt i ord som *luddoven* og *ludfattig*, men går man lidt tilbage i tid, finder man også fx *ludbedrøvet* og *ludkedelig* (Aa. Hansen 1967: 456). Dette vidner om at det som vi i vores egen tid oplever som kombinatoriske begrænsninger, ikke har været begrænsninger førhen og heller ikke behøver være det i al fremtid.

Der er altså en stadig kommen og gåen af forstærkere. Man kan altid lave nye forstærkere, og disse kan med tiden glide i baggrunden og måske helt ud.

Man kan også altid puste nyt liv i gamle forstærkere. Et ord som *pivåben* har gamle rødder; det nævnes fx i Moths ordbog fra omkring 1700 under opslagsformen *Pib-åben*. Første sammensætningsled *pib-/piv-* har gennem årene kunnet bruges i forskellige sammensætninger - *pivfalsk* er fx velkendt, også i moderne dansk - men man har desuden eksempler på *pibsur*, *pibtom* og *pivradikal* (jf. Ordbog over det danske Sprog). I 1970'erne og senere var *pib-/piv-* ikke videre produktivt, men i årene omkring 2010 lavede et slikfirma en reklamekampagne hvor ordet *pivuhyggeligt* indgik, og det havde på det tidspunkt en velset opmærksomhedsskabende effekt. Faktisk er *piv-* nu igen et forholdsvis produktivt førsteled. En flittig bruger af kreative nydannelser med dette førsteled er den politiske kommentator Peter Mogensen. Han er en af de faste medvirkende i tv-programmet Tirsdagsanalysen på TV 2, og alene i programmet tirsdag den 6.10.2025 fik han ytret to nydannelser i sin vurdering af regeringens klimaindsats, jf. (22) og (23).

(22) der er de jo pivblanke i regeringen
(23) der har de [: Alternativet og Enhedslisten] jo en pivstor dagsorden for at komme efter regeringen

Endnu et eksempel på genanvendelse er *skæppe-*. Ifølge Jarvad (1995: 236) var det en forstærker der dukkede op i slutningen af 1960'erne, men som allerede i midten af 1970'erne virkede "antikveret". Ordet *skæppeskøn* blev dog populært igen i 1990'erne, og en søgning i et aviskorpus dækkende tiden 2005-2025 giver mange eksempler på *skæppeskøn*, *skæppeskønt* og *skæppeskønne*. Der er altså en stadig bevægelse i inventaret for forstærkere.

12. Afslutningsord

En af de kendte drivkræfter i forbindelse med dannelsen af nye ord er behovet for at tale om nye fænomener og om nye måder at tolke verden på (Jarvad 1995: 13 f.). Ved indførelsen af elbiler opstod et behov for at omtale de steder hvor man kunne tanke el (ikke benzin eller diesel), og disse kunne man så kalde for *ladestandere* og *ladepunkter*. Tilsvarende begyndte man på et tidspunkt at kalde vejstrækninger hvor der erfaringsmæssigt sker mange uheld, for *sorte veje*. I tilfælde som disse er der sket små ændringer i verden, dels fysisk, dels opfattelsesmæssigt, og den slags motivation for nye ord relaterer sig dermed til den ideationelle metafunktion i Hallidays forstand (jf. Halliday 1985). Anderledes forholder det sig med sproglige udtryk som forstærkere. Deres primære eksistensberettigelse er i stedet interpersonel: at udtrykke afsenders subjektive vurdering og at vække modtagers opmærksomhed. Dermed er behovet for nye forstærkere ikke noget der foranlediges af at der er opstået et nyt fænomen, eller at man tolker verden på en ny måde. I stedet må man finde motivationen andetsteds; her er Levinsons neogriceanske tankegang til stor hjælp. *Princippet om det påfaldende* og *princippet om det upåfaldende* tjener som en ramme for hvordan man kan forstå den stadige rekruttering af nye kandidater.

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Topicality, text structure and anaphoric relations

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Abstract: In this paper, I define and develop the concept of "(textual) anaphora", i.e. text relations between an anaphor and an antecedent, and I focus particularly on the so-called direct anaphors, viz. the anaphors that designate the same individual entity as the antecedent. My primary attention is on the linguistic material of the anaphors, which fundamentally depends on the antecedent's pragmatic prominence, i.e. its degree of presence and saliency in the hearer's mental-cognitive representation, at the moment it is anaphorised. This prominence is based partly on the antecedent's topicality, which in turn depends on its place in four different semantic, syntactic and referential hierarchies, partly on the text and narrative structure, e.g. the textual distance between antecedent and anaphor, the presence of other possible antecedents, and possible topic changes. The topicality and the text/narrative structure can also be defined as "vertical" and "horizontal" criteria respectively, and as empirical evidence I use a bilingual (Italian – Danish) text corpus as well as other text sources. All examples are translated into English.

Keywords: anaphors, linguistic marking, topicality hierarchies, text structure

1. Introduction

An anaphor is defined as the linguistic expression with which an entity is resumed, i.e. mentioned again, in the following co-text. An anaphor, as e.g. *it* in (1)-(2), thus refers back to a previous co-textual constituent, the "antecedent", as e.g. *a car* in (1)-(2), on which it depends for its interpretation and without which it loses its semantic and referential meaning.[1] The antecedent may be a "referring expression", i.e. a constituent with which the speaker creates a link to a specific referent in an extralinguistic (imagined or real) world, as *a car* in (1),[2] or a non-referring, non-specific constituent, as *a car* in (2):

(1) I saw *a car* in our backyard yesterday. I had never seen *it* before.
(2) I shall never buy *a car*. I wouldn't know where to park *it.*

In both cases, the second sentence loses its communicative function without the presence of the antecedent *a car.* Graphically, the two anaphoric relations can be described as in Figure 1 and 2 respectively, which show that the intratextual (or endophoric) anaphoric relation in itself is independent of the referential status of the antecedent. However, the existential conditions of antecedent and anaphor (established by their co-texts) must be the same, for which reason (3) is impossible, and the asterisk indicates the lack of coherence between the two sentences (Korzen 2000a: 517-523):

(3) I shall never buy *a car*. *I will park *it* in our backyard.

[1] In this paper I confine myself to nominal antecedents and anaphors. The cited definition regards the "textual anaphor". The "rhetorical anaphor" is defined as the repetition of one or more words at the beginning of utterances (or parts of utterances) within the same text (Ferrari 2010a: 59).

[2] On the very complex concept of "reference" (which various scholars see as a "speech act", e.g. Searle 1969: 23ff; Hanks 2019) and "referring constituents", cf. e.g. Searle (1969), Lyons (1977), Milner (1978), Winkelmann (1978), Brown & Yule (1983), Harder (1990), Hanks (2019) and for further discussions Korzen (1996: 60-72, 2000a: 196-202).

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Figure 1. Graphical description of (1).

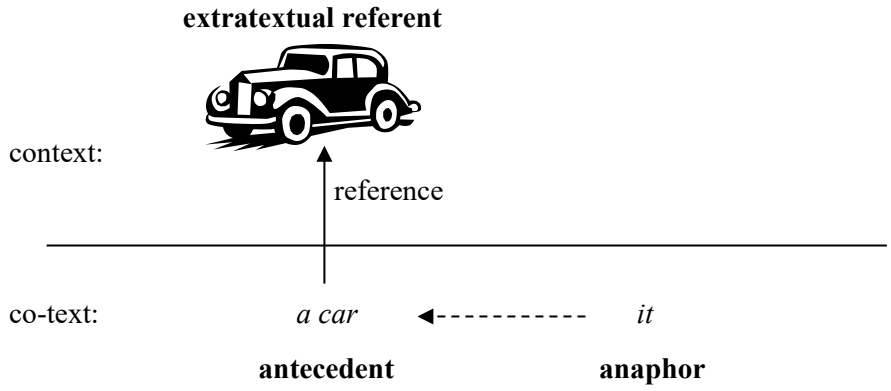
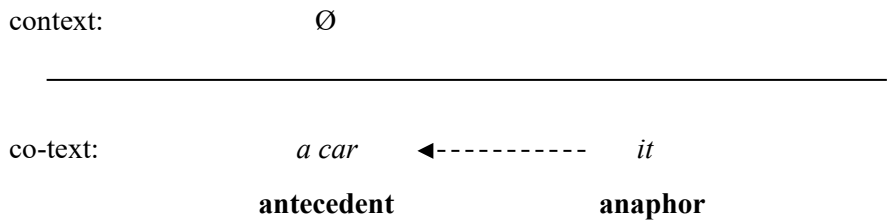


Figure 2. Graphical description of (2).



It is not always easy or straightforward to choose the right linguistic material for an anaphor in a given co-text. Three good examples of this are the authentic Danish cases in (4)-(6):

(4) Folk der er på venteliste dør, fordi *de* er for lange. (Interview in Denmark's Radio, cit. in *Politiken's* column "Oh Danmark" 16.2.97)[3]
'People who are on waiting list die because *they* are too long'.

(5) Schmeichel sikrede sig bolden i anden omgang, men havde slået ryggen og smed *den* over sidelinjen, så han kunne blive behandlet. (*Politiken*; cit. in *Politiken's* column "Oh Danmark" 5.1.97)
'Schmeichel secured the ball in the second half but had hit his back and threw *it* over the sideline so that he could be treated'.

(6) Han var ude for at lufte sin hund, da han kom i skænderi og slagsmål med den nu efterlyste mand om hunden. Pludselig trak *denne* en pistol og slog caféejeren. (*Politiken*; cit. in. *Politiken's* column "Oh Danmark" 7.2.99)
'He was out walking his dog when he got into an argument and fight with the now wanted man about the dog. Suddenly, *the latter* pulled out a gun and hit the café owner'.

On the basis of such "problematic" examples, the purpose of this paper is to develop and discuss the phenomenon of anaphora with special reference to the linguistic material of the anaphor in order to

[3] The column "Oh Danmark" appeared for many years in the Sunday edition of the Danish newspaper *Politiken* and contained comic cases of "problematic" language usage.

clarify and explain the problems connected with examples (4)-(6). Since most of my research has focused on Italian (and Danish), much of the following empirical evidence will be in Italian, but the described phenomena and the linguistic circumstances that govern them are similar in the other Romance – as well as Germanic – languages, and all examples will be translated into English.

The following pages are structured as follows: In section 2, I describe the various anaphor types (direct, associative and resumptive) and the different ways of textualising the direct anaphors. In section 3, I introduce the over-all criteria that determine the material of the textualised anaphor, and I distinguish between so-called intraphrasal "vertical" factors and interphrasal "horizontal" factors. I describe the former in more detail and with a series of examples in section 4 and subsections, and the latter in section 5 and subsections. Section 6 contains my conclusions and an analysis of examples (4)-(6).

2. Anaphor types

Anaphors and anaphoric relations are, as is well known, among the most important elements of **textual cohesion**. The anaphor indicates that the same entity is rementioned and states that the text unit in which it occurs should be interpreted as connected with that of the antecedent, thereby contributing to **textual coherence**, i.e. to the fact that the two textual segments belong to the same text.[4]

It is also well known that anaphoric expressions can be textualised (i.e. realised textually) in various ways.[5] The examples cited so far are all "direct" anaphors, i.e. anaphors that designate the same individual entity as the antecedent, and so are also the (Italian and English) anaphors in (7)-(13):

(7) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *[Ø]* Era di una marca che non conoscevo.
[NULL SUBJECT]
[English translation: I saw a car in our backyard last night. *[Ø = It]* was of a brand that I didn't know.][6]

(8) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. Non *l'*avevo mai vista prima.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. I had never seen *it* before.
[UNSTRESSED (in Italian CLITIC) PRONOUN, see Danish examples in (4)-(5)]

(9) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *Essa* era di una marca che non conosco.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. *That* was of a brand that I don't know.
[STRESSED PRONOUN, see a Danish example in (6)]

(10) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *La macchina* era di una marca che non conosco.

[4] I here follow the definitions of textual cohesion and coherence for example by Conte (1991: 13-14). Another definition of textual coherence regards the text production phase and the principles and criteria adopted by the speaker in order to form his/her text so that the interlocutor interprets it in the intended way; cf. Merlini Barbaresi (1988: 130) and Cornish (1996: 38). For further discussion of these concepts, see e.g. Korzen (2000a: 382 ff.), and for the various types of coherence: referential, temporal, spatial and predicative, cf. for example Lundquist (1999: 70) and Korzen (2000a: 382 ff.).

[5] Some scholars, e.g. Ferrari (2010a/b), distinguish terminologically between "anaphor" (or "anaphora") designating the relation between two linguistic expressions, and the "anaphoric expression", viz. the expression that textualises such a relation. In this paper I use the term "anaphor" for both meanings.

[6] Unlike Italian, being a pro-drop language, English does not permit a null subject in cases like this. Instead, in the Germanic languages null subjects with finite verbs can be found in the so-called serial constructions $V_1 + V_2$, see section 4.1 and examples (21)' and (22)'.

I saw a car in our backyard last night. *The car* was of a brand that I don't know.
[NP WITH A DEFINITE ARTICLE, "faithful" anaphor][7]

(11) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *Il veicolo* era di una marca che non conosco.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. *The vehicle* was of a brand that I don't know.
[NP WITH A DEFINITE ARTICLE, "unfaithful" anaphor][8]

(12) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *Quella macchina* era di una marca che non conosco.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. *That car* was of a brand that I don't know.
[NP WITH A DEMONSTRATIVE ARTICLE]

(13) Ho visto *una macchina* nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *Quella macchina* non *l'*avevo mai vista prima.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. *That car* I had never seen *it* before.
[DISLOCATED DEMONSTRATIVE NP]

Apart from such "direct" anaphors, an anaphor may be "associative",[9] i.e. designate an entity that is not identical to the one designated by the antecedent but can be associated with it, as in (14), or a "resumptive anaphor", which "incapsulates" the antecedent, as in (15), where the antecedent is the whole first sentence:

(14) Ho visto una macchina nel nostro cortile ieri sera. *Il parabrezza* era rotto.
I saw a car in our backyard last night. *The windshield* was broken.
[ASSOCIATIVE NP ANAPHOR]

(15) Ho visto due macchine in un incidente nella nostra strada. *Quell'evento* mi ha scioccato.
I saw two cars in an accident in our street. *That event* shocked me.
[RESUMPTIVE NP ANAPHOR]

In the following, I shall confine myself to direct anaphors, as they manifest a particular and interesting relation between the linguistic material and specific semantic-pragmatic and textual circumstances. Regarding "associative anaphors", I can refer my readers to e.g. Hawkins (1978), Kleiber (1997a/b), (2001), Conte (1988/1999), Cornish (1999), Lundquist (2003), Korzen (2000a, 2014) and other scholars cited there, and regarding "resumptive anaphors" see e.g. Halliday & Hasan (1976) (who adopt the term "extended reference"), Krenn (1985), D'Addio Colosimo (1984, 1988, 1990), Conte (1988/1999), Korzen (2016) and Pecorari (2017). Regarding the anaphoric ellipsis, cf. Korzen (2017) and other scholars mentioned there, and for an overview of these four kinds of anaphors, see also Korzen (2023). The so-called "evolutive anaphor", which designates an entity that has evolved compared to the entity designated by the antecedent, is discussed e.g. by Asher (2000), Lundquist (2007) and Korzen (2006, 2009).

[7] A "faithful" anaphor is an NP anaphor with the same head noun as the antecedent.
[8] The head noun of an "unfaithful" anaphor is lexically different from that of the antecedent, and the anaphor therefore conveys new information about the resumed entity. In Korzen (2023: 113-116) I discuss the various semantic possibilities of such information on the basis of three different Italian corpora, one of which is the "Mr. Bean corpus" that we shall return to in the following sections.
[9] Also termed "indirect" or "implicit" (Ferrari 2010a: 60; Korzen 1996: 547).

3. The linguistic marking of direct anaphors

In examples (7)-(13) we go from less linguistically marked anaphors to more linguistically marked anaphors. The linguistic marking of an anaphor can be summarised as follows:

- lexical marking: the use of NPs instead of pronouns and null anaphors, cf. (10)-(13);
- morpho-phonological marking: the use of stressed pronouns instead of unstressed pronouns or null subjects, cf. (9), or the use of demonstrative articles instead of definite articles, cf. (12)-(13);
- positional marking: the use of dislocated NPs or pronouns instead of NPs or pronouns in unmarked position, cf. (13);[10]
- prosodic marking: in spoken language the use of contrastive accentuation or other particular intonation.

As can be seen, more than one kind of marking can occur in the same anaphor.

As we saw at the end of section 2, the literature on anaphora different from the direct type is very rich, and the same can be said about the direct anaphors. Among the most important Italian contributions we might mention Marello (1979), Conte (1988/1999), Berretta (1990), Simone (1990), and informative encyclopaedia articles can be found in Ferrari (2010a/b) and Pecorari (2024). For more references, see Korzen (2000a, 2001). The linguistic material of the anaphoric expressions is discussed e.g. by Givón (1983), who mainly adopts quantitative and semantic criteria (such as the distance between antecedent and anaphora and the possible semantic interference caused by other lexical elements in the text span), by Fox (1987a/b/c), who focuses on the importance of text structure, by Berretta (1990), who points particularly to syntactic phenomena, and by Ferrari (2010b), who distinguishes between semantic repetition, substitution and contiguity in the relation antecedent – anaphor, and also points to the importance of the text type. Interesting discussions of the role and degree of antecedent accessibility are found in Ariel (2001 and other works) and in Arnold (2010). In a recent study, De Cesare (2025) investigates the main referential chains of biographies generated by GPT-4[11] and finds a tendency of repetitive textual patterns with over-codification of discourse referents and over-segmentation of semantically and pragmatically compact textual units.

All the mentioned approaches are useful and relevant, but taken individually they do not give a complete picture. Fundamentally, what is decisive for the linguistic material of an anaphor is the textual prominence, or salience, of the entity in question at the time it is anaphorised. The more text-pragmatically prominent the resumed entity is, i.e. the more salient it is in the hearer's mental-cognitive representation based on the textual (or contextual) input, the less the anaphoric expression needs marking, i.e. the less linguistic material is required in the anaphor.

It is important to state that generally it is not possible to outline absolutely categorical rules regarding the linguistic material of an anaphor, but some more or less strong tendencies can be determined. In the following pages I propose as essential for the prominence of a resumed antecedent the combination of two different aspects, 1: semantic, syntactic and pragmatic factors determining the general topicality of the antecedent, 2: the structure of the text sequence and of the narration in question. Hence, we can distinguish between **intraphrasal and "vertical" factors**, in the sense that they operate within the antecedent in a hierarchically vertical way (cf. section 4), and **interphrasal and "horizontal" factors**, which operate between constituents in a textually horizontal way (cf. section 5).

[10] I here ignore the complicated discussion of the appropriateness of defining the position of the dislocated nominal constituent as "marked"; cf. Duranti & Ochs (1979), Berruto (1985: 59, foot note 1), Sobrero (1993: 425, note 21) and Korzen (2000a: 452-464).

[11] Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4, a multimodal large language model trained and created by OpenAI.

A third phenomenon particularly pertinent to the horizontal factor is the risk of semantic interference, i.e. the presence of other referents in the co-text that could be interpreted as relevant to the anaphor relation.

As empirical evidence of the factors mentioned I shall cite a series of text examples, of which many come from a corpus created in a contrastive empirical survey Italian – Danish, the so-called "Mr. Bean corpus"; some examples derive from other sources. The "Mr. Bean corpus" consists of narrative texts, more precisely 90 written and oral retellings of two Mr. Bean episodes, "The Library" and (part of) "Merry Christmas Mr. Bean", produced by 27 students from the University of Turin and 18 students from the University of Copenhagen. The corpus was created in 1995 by a group of researchers from the University of Copenhagen and the Copenhagen Business School, including myself (Skytte et al. 1999), https://mrbeankorpus.cbs.dk/, with the collaboration of the University of Turin and Carla Bazzanella. In the episode "The Library", from which most of the following examples originate, Mr. Bean enters the reading room of a library where he receives for consultation an incunabulum, which he later manages to cut up and destroy (see section 5.2 example (51) for an almost full account of the episode). In the episode "Merry Christmas Mr. Bean", the protagonist finds himself in a department store, where he stages a very personal version of the Christmas nativity scene with figurines from an exhibition. We showed the two episodes to the students and asked them to retell the episodes orally and in writing in their mother tongue. The corpus totals the number of words cited in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of words in the Mr. Bean corpus.

	Oral texts	Written texts
Italian texts	11,813	7,374
Danish texts	11,691	7,261

4. Intraphrasal, vertical factors: topicality

The intraphrasal and vertical factors are linked to the concept of textual topicality. In recent decades, different scholars have proposed various semantic and pragmatic hierarchies that determine the probability that a nominal constituent will obtain **topic status** in a sentence or a text sequence. For the definition of **topic** I follow e.g. Givón (1983) and Lambrecht (1996: 127), who define topic as the textually recurring entity/entities about which the individual clauses "speak", viz. on which they provide information.[12] The hierarchies that determine the topic probability are based on the following factors: identifiability, cf. (16), semantic/syntactic functions and roles, cf. (17), semantic classification, individualisation and lexical features, cf. (18)/(20), and referentiality, cf. (19):

(16) **Identifiability:** [+ identifiable] > [– identifiable]

(17) **Semantic/syntactic roles**: Agent/subject > Experiencer/dative > Patient/object > other (e.g. secondary constituent)

(18) **Semantic classification and individualisation:** countable first-order constituent singular

[12] For more in-depth discussions on this subject, cf. e.g. Ariel (2001), Korzen (1999, 2000a: 211-217). For the definition of **text sequence**, cf. e.g. Korzen (2000c) and other scholars cited there.

uncountable first-order constituent > first-order constituent plural > second/third-order constituent[13]

(19) **Referentiality:** deictic > specific > generic > non-specific > intensional/conceptual[14]

(20) **Human or non-human:** [+ human] > [– human]

The further to the left a textual constituent is placed in the five scales mentioned, the more text-pragmatically prominent it is and the more suitable it is as text topic. For example, an Agent/subject appears more frequently as topic than an Experiencer/dative, which in turn appears more frequently than a Patient/object. A deictic, or at least specific, constituent appears more frequently as topic than a generic (i.e. a constituent designating a whole category), a non-specific or an intensional/conceptual constituent, etc. Hence, the most prototypical topic of a sentence or a text sequence is a constituent with the semantic-syntactic role of Agent/subject, referentially deictic or at least specific and lexically countable, singular and human. Of course, decisive for the actual choice of topic in a given text (sequence) is the text content, the narration itself, which may also imply topic changes with particular consequences for anaphor material. This phenomenon will be dealt with in section 5.2 below.

The hierarchies in (16), (17) and (20) are inspired by Givón (1976), while those in (18) and (19) are based on Herslund (1996), who follows the so-called "transitivity scales" suggested by Hopper & Thompson (1980: 252) and the hierarchies for object marking in various (especially Romance) languages proposed by Bossong (1991: 160). For more detailed discussions on these hierarchies, cf. Korzen (2000a/b, 2004, 2017).

The five hierarchies generally play important roles for nominal syntax. For example, all five hierarchies prove to be decisive for the tendency to nominal determination: the further to the left a constituent is placed, the higher the tendency is to determine it in a text, a tendency I have discussed in Korzen (2000a: 214-361, 2000b, 2004). But the last four, (17)-(20), also have an important impact on the linguistic material in anaphorisation, as we shall see in the following sections. As a general tendency, the further to the left the antecedent is placed, the less an anaphor needs linguistic marking.[15]

4.1. Semantic/syntactic function and lexical features

In this section, I give some evidence of the importance of the semantic role, syntactic function and lexical features of the antecedent, cf. the scales in (17) and (20). Examples (21)-(22) are very typical cases of text sequential introductions of a human text topic, an Agent/subject, i.e. an antecedent placed in the "top position" of scales (17) and (20), with subsequent anaphorisations by unmarked anaphors. More precisely, in (21) we have the text initial introduction of *un uomo 'a man'* (viz. Mr. Bean), and in (22) a sequence initial introduction of the protagonist *De Luca*:

(21) Un uomo entra in una biblioteca dove è possibile consultare testi antichi. Nel raggiungere il

[13] First-order entities are physical objects and masses, which exist in the dimension space, second-order entities are events, actions and state-of-affairs, which occur or take place in the dimension time, while third-order entities are non-observable mental phenomena such as propositions and equations, cf. e.g. Lyons (1977) and Dik (1997).

[14] An intensional/conceptual constituent is a constituent referentially reduced to an intensional, or conceptual, meaning for instance by being incorporated, see examples in section 4.2 below.

[15] See also Givón's (1990: 969) so-called "quantity principle":
(a) A larger chunk of information will be given a larger chunk of code
(b) Less predictable information will be given more coding material
(c) More important information will be given more coding material
where (b) is particularly relevant to anaphor relations, while (c) is relevant to nominal determination.

posto che *gli* è stato assegnato dal bibliotecario, *[Ø]* si sforza di non fare rumore camminando in punta dei piedi. Con molta attenzione *[Ø]* si siede e *[Ø]* comincia ad estrarre dalla borsa i fogli per gli appunti e il portapenne. Per non disturbare il suo vicino che è intento nella lettura e gli manda occhiatacce al minimo rumore, *[Ø]* arriva al punto di oliare la cerniera del portapenne. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA8)[16]
'A man enters a library where it is possible to consult ancient texts. In reaching the place that *he* has been assigned by the librarian, *he* tries hard not to make any noise by walking on tiptoe. Very carefully *he* sits down and *[Ø]* begins to take paper and pencil case out of his bag. In order not to disturb his neighbour who is absorbed in reading and sends angry looks at the slightest noise, *he* goes so far as to oil the zip of the pencil case'.

(22) De Luca si morse un labbro e *[Ø]* lanciò un'altra occhiata allo scalone. Poi *[Ø]* si piegò in avanti, *[Ø]* corse fuori e *[Ø]* saltò sulla jeep che stava partendo, attaccandosi alla bandoliera di un agente. (Lucarelli 1998b: 15)
'De Luca bit his lip and *[Ø]* glanced at the staircase again. Then *he* leaned forward, *[Ø]* ran out and *[Ø]* jumped into the departing jeep, holding on to a policeman's bandolier'.

The unmarked anaphors in Italian are the null subjects and, in (21), the clitic pronoun *gli*, in English, the pronoun *he* and the null subjects. The latter occur (with finite verbs)[17] in the so-called "serial constructions", which are intraclausal coordinate verb constructions, V_1 *and* V_2 (*and* V_3…), where the subject of V_2 (V_3…) is the same as that of V_1 but cannot be rendered explicit without breaking up the construction:

(21)' Very carefully *he* sits down and *[Ø]* begins to take paper and pencil case out of his bag.

(22)' Then *he* leaned forward, *[Ø]* ran out and *[Ø]* jumped into the departing jeep.[18]

Evidently, the topical constituent is pragma-cognitively very prominent: designating the entity that the text sequence talks about, cf. section 4.0, it stands, so to speak, at the top of our awareness, and this is reflected in the very limited need for linguistic material in the anaphor.

Instead, if we go down the hierarchy of (17) and (20), we observe that constituents other than human subjects/Agents much more often require marked anaphors. The following examples show three anaphorisations of *il libro 'the book',* in (23) functioning as object/Patient, in (24)-(25) as secondary constituents:

(23) arriva il bibliotecario e [Ø = Mr. Bean] chiude immediatamente il libro, e- dopo che il biblio, il bibliotecario è andato via, [Ø] riapre *il libro* e [Ø] vede che... ha combinato un grande

[16] Regarding the "Mr. Bean corpus" references (Skytte et al. 1999), *IS* and *IM* indicate Italian written and oral texts respectively; *DS* and *DM* indicate Danish written and oral texts respectively. The participants were divided into two groups, *A* and *B*.

[17] In this paper, I ignore non-finite verb constructions, i.e. constructions with a gerund, a participle or a nominalised verb, such as e.g. *Arriving late*, you'll miss dinner; *Born in the late 50s,* Joe grew up in absolute poverty; *Upon arrival in town,* we had dinner. Such constructions strongly contribute to the density and complexity of the text structure (Korzen 2021, 2024) and always refer to the co-text topic, in the cited cases *you, Joe, we.*

[18] In Danish, these constructions are also termed "kongruenskonstruktioner" (see e.g. Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 284-285, 979-980), and they often correspond to finite + non-finite verb constructions in the Romance languages (cf. Herslund 2000; Korzen 2000a: 431-433; Korzen & Gylling 2017: 53-54). A precise definition of serial verb constructions (in a stricter sense) – also termed complex predicates – is found e.g. in Aikhenvald (2006: 1). On V_1 + V_2 constructions in statistical comparison with other anaphors in Danish, see Korzen (2007).

pasticcio (Skytte et al. 1999, IMB13)[19]
'the librarian arrives and [Ø = he/Mr. Bean] closes immediately the book, and after the libra… the librarian has left, [Ø = he] reopens *the book* and [Ø] sees that he has made a big mess'.

(24) Anche in questo caso [Ø = Mr. Bean] cerca di fare del suo meglio, ma [Ø] si rivela estremamente maldestro: dopo aver appoggiato una velina su una pagina del libro, [Ø] starnutisce fragorosamente e [Ø] sporca *il libro*. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA13)
'Also in this case, [Ø = Mr. Bean] tries to do his best, but [Ø = he] turns out to be extremely clumsy: after placing a tissue on a page of the book, [Ø = he] sneezes loudly and [Ø] dirties *the book*'.

(25) [...] [Ø = Mr. Bean] decide a questo punto di strappare il foglio celando il rumore provocato con un finto starnuto e rifilando quanto rimasto attaccato alla rilegatura del libro con un taglierino riducendo in tal modo *il libro* in pezzi. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA5)
'[...] at this point, [Ø = Mr. Bean] decides to tear the page, hiding the noise caused by a fake sneeze and trimming what remained attached to the binding of the book with a cutter, thus reducing *the book* in pieces'.

While the subject/Agent *Mr. Bean* continues to be rementioned with unmarked anaphors, *the book*, a non-human object/Patient and secondary constituent respectively, is anaphorised with NPs even though the text distance from the last mention is very short. In these cases, unmarked anaphorisations, i.e. anaphorisations with the unstressed pronouns *lo – 'it'*, *lo riapre, lo sporca, riducendolo 'reopens it, dirties it, reducing it',* would not be sufficient.

Also among human subjects/Agents, there may be differences in saliency and therefore in anaphorisation. The example in (23) shows the difference between the primary topic, *Mr. Bean*, and a narratively secondary topic, *il bibliotecario 'the librarian'*, who plays a minor role in the story. Even after the text introduction of the latter, *arriva il bibliotecario, 'the librarian arrives', Mr. Bean* is still anaphorised with an Italian null subject: *[Ø] chiude immediatamente il libro '[Ø = he] closes immediately the book'*. The same happens after the rementioning of the librarian, *dopo che il bibliotecario è andato via, 'after the librarian has left'*. While the librarian is again anaphorised with a full NP, in spite of a short distance from the previous mention, Mr. Bean is once more anaphorised with a null subject: *[Ø] riapre il libro e [Ø] vede che... '[Ø = he] reopens the book and [Ø] sees that…'*.

Constituents in lower positions in the hierarchies, as well as secondary topics, may very well be anaphorised with unmarked anaphors, but this requires a textual position very close to the antecedent and – unlike in (23) where both the primary and a secondary topic are in play – the absence of possible semantic interference; this is the case of *il libro – lo – lo 'the book – it – it'* in (26). In (27) both Mr. Bean and the librarian are in play, but the latter *(il custode 'the caretaker')* is a secondary constituent that never reaches a topic position, and the sentence content disambiguates the anaphoric reference:[20]

(26) [Ø = Mr. Bean] Si infila meticolosamente un paio di guanti bianchi prima di ricevere il libro e non appena glie*lo* portano comincia a sfogliar*lo*, mettere segnalibri e a ricopiare le

[19] Here, as in other oral examples, the comma, the hyphen and the three dots indicate pauses of varying length in an oral retelling. For precise accounts of the transcription principles, see Skytte et al. (1999: 577-580).

[20] In Korzen (2001: 123-124) I discuss the importance for anaphor interpretation of the three different pragmatic-cognitive levels: the lexical, co-textual and contextual level, levels that can be described as "Chinese boxes". See also Lundquist (2000: 110) and Korzen (2000a: 532-534).

immagini di suo interesse. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA5)
'He meticulously puts on a pair of white gloves before receiving the book and as soon as they bring *it* to him, he begins to leaf through *it*, place bookmarks and copy the pictures of his interest'.

(27) [Ø = Mr. Bean] Parla a gesti con il custode, *gli* indica il libro che vuole prendere in visione [...] (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA4)
'He speaks with gestures with the caretaker, shows *him* the book he wants to see [...]'

Usually, the risk of semantic interference is greater in the non-topical positions than in the topical position where the same particular individual or, possibly, group of particular individuals remain in the story focus. In case of possible semantic interference, a marked anaphor is generally preferred, as seen in (28), where *il libro che aveva richiesto* '*the book he had requested'* is resumed with a "double-marked" anaphor *questo libro* '*this book'* (marked both lexically and morphophonologically). This is an oral example which, like all oral texts, requires greater clarity due to the lack of visual control of the information given in the previous co-text, and apart from the anaphor chain originating from *the book* (marked with "j") the text sequence also contains anaphor chains originating from *una carta velina 'a tissue paper'* (marked with "k") and *una figura 'a figure'* (marked with "l")

(28) ecco che arriva il, il guardiano-, a portare appunto, il suo li, il libro che aveva richiesto$_j$, inizia ad aprire *questo libro$_j$*, perché voleva appunto, ricopiare, con una carta velina$_k$, una figura$_l$ di *questo libro$_j$*, e prende la matita prende *la carta velina$_k$*, cerca di di tracopiare *la figura$_l$* (Skytte et al. 1999, IMB2)
'Then comes the, the guard-, to bring precisely, his book, *the book he had requested$_j$*, he starts to open *this book$_j$*, because he wanted precisely, to copy, with *a tissue paper$_k$*, *a figure$_l$* of *this book$_j$*, and he takes the pencil, he takes *the tissue paper$_k$*, tries to copy *the figure$_l$*'

If, on the other hand, a non-topical constituent rises in "rank" and becomes topic, such topic change requires a marked anaphor, even in a position immediately following the antecedent:

(29) prima di uscire devono appunto consegnare il libro, *il libro* viene visto dal guardiano se è in buona condizione, poi escono [...] (Skytte et al. 1999, IMB2)
'before leaving they must return the book, *the book* is checked by the guard if it is in a good condition, then they leave [...]'

We shall return to the phenomenon of topic change as well as to the importance of the text structure in section 5 below. More Italian and Danish examples of the phenomena dealt with in this section can be found in Korzen (2000a: 501-512).

4.2. Referentiality and semantic classification

In this section I cite some examples of the importance of referentiality and semantic classification, cf. the scales in (18)-(19). The referentiality scale, (19), is generally very significant for the text topicality of a constituent and indeed for nominal determination, but regarding anaphor material the most important distinction is the one between **extensional** and **intensional** NP antecedents. Logical semantics distinguishes between the **extension** of a nominal lexeme, defined as all the extra-linguistic entities of which the lexeme constitutes a true description, also called the lexeme's denotation, and the **intension** of a nominal lexeme, defined as the lexical features and characteristics attributed to the entities of the category in question. The intension of a lexeme, also termed the **concept** in question,

determines its extension, and the full extension constitutes the designated category.[21]

An **extensional** NP is an NP designating an extensionally defined part or portion of the category in question, i.e. a number of countable objects or a quantity of uncountable mass, possibly the category in its entirety (generic NPs). **Intensional**, or **conceptual**, NPs merely express the features and characteristics attributed to the entities of the category without defining any extensional quantity. NPs with a determiner are always extensional, whereas NPs without a determiner may be extensional or intensional (Korzen 1996, 2000a). Extensional NPs cover the four highest positions of scale (19); only an extensionally defined entity may be interpreted as specific (possibly deictic), generic or non-specific, and the examples (1)-(2) and Figure 1-2 in section 1 illustrate that e.g. the difference between specific and non-specific antecedents generally has no (or very little) impact on anaphor material.

Intensional NPs occur for instance in incorporations, such as Italian "comprare *casa*, sbagliare *strada*, bere *vino*", 'to buy [a] house, to take the wrong road, to drink wine', and Danish "købe *hus*, læse *avis*, skrive *brev*, drikke *vin*" 'to buy [a] house, to read [a] newspaper, to write [a] letter, to drink wine', constructions in which the NPs merely add abstract restrictions to the verb as in "[to make a] house purchase, [to perform] newspaper reading, letter writing, wine drinking", etc.[22] They also occur in prepositional phrases, see an example in (34) below. These NPs do not convey any meaning of extension or extensionally defined entities.

The difference between an extensional and an intensional antecedent is crucial for the material of an anaphor. See for example:

(30) Gianni ha comprato una casa vicino a Ginevra. *[Ø]* è molto vecchia
'Gianni bought a house near Geneva. *[Ø = it]* is very old'

(31) Gianni ha comprato casa vicino a Ginevra. *(?)[Ø]* è molto vecchia
'Gianni bought [a] house near Geneva. *(?)[Ø = it]* is very old'

Whereas the null subject anaphor in (30) is unproblematic in Italian, the one in (31) is not excluded, but definitely less frequent than the one in (30). A null anaphorisation of the object in *ha comprato casa '[he] bought [a] house'* requires that the interlocutor in his/her mental representation of the situation creates an entity type, a "mental" house, salient enough to allow such anaphorisation, and authentic examples are generally rare:

(32) Anche quando il bambino si è riaddormentato, né la mamma né suo marito hanno aperto bocca. Avrei voluto aprir*la* io, avrei voluto dire che il piccolo era carino [...]. (Tamaro 1991: 103)
'Even when the baby fell asleep again, neither the mother nor her husband opened [Ø = their] mouth. I would have liked to have opened *it* [= my mouth], I would have liked to say that the little one was cute [...]'.

(33) - Sua moglie non diceva sul serio, eh signor Comstock? Vuole il divorzio?
- Beh, può darsi che cambi idea.
- Ah, *la* cambia sicuramente. (Marks 1963)[23]

[21] For lengthy discussions of these terms and notions as well as references to a number of scholars who have explored them, see e.g. Korzen (1996: 53-59, 2000a: 167ff, 209ff).

[22] Such constructions are extremely rare in English with countable nouns in the singular. On noun incorporation in the Romance languages, see e.g. Herslund (2002), and on noun incorporation in Italian and Danish, see e.g. Korzen (2000a: 310-339, 2002) and other scholars cited there.

[23] A dialogue from the TV-film *Perry Mason*, Italian RAI1. Films and programmes in other languages than Italian are generally dubbed in Italian in Italian television.

'- Your wife wasn't serious, was she, Mr. Comstock? Does she want a divorce?
- Well, she might [literally:] change idea.
- Oh, surely she will [literally:] change *it*'.

(34) Angelica s'infilò il pellicciotto. Disse a Viola che l'accompagnasse con la sua macchina, perché lei era senza macchina, *l'*aveva presa Oreste. (Ginzburg 1973: 105)
'Angelica put on her fur coat. She told Viola to take her in her car, because she was without [Ø = a] car, Oreste had taken *it*'.

In (32) the incorporation construction *aprire bocca 'open mouth'* is synonymous with the verb *parlare 'speak',* but the anaphor *la 'it'* refers to a specific *mouth,* i.e. the speaker's. In (33) the anaphor *la 'it'* refers to the specific idea about the divorce, and in (34) the construction *(essere) senza macchina '(to be) without car'* means something like "to be carless", and again the anaphor *l' (la) 'it'* refers to a specific car, viz. Angelica's.

The lack of extension in intensional antecedents means that unmarked anaphorisations require a very short distance between antecedent and anaphor, as in the authentic examples just cited. If we interpose other linguistic material, as in:

(35) Gianni ha comprato una casa vicino a Ginevra una settimana fa, appena tornato dall'Italia. *[Ø]* è molto vecchia.
'Gianni bought a house near Geneva a week ago, just returned from Italy. *[Ø = It]* is very old.'

(36) Gianni ha comprato casa vicino a Ginevra una settimana fa, appena tornato dall'Italia. $^{??}$*[Ø]* è molto vecchia.
'Gianni bought [a] house near Geneva a week ago, just returned from Italy. $^{??}$*[Ø = It]* is very old.'

the construction with the extensional antecedent in (35) remains acceptable, while problems arise with the intensional antecedent in (36), where a marked anaphor such as *la casa 'the house'* would be preferred, or an altogether different clause such as *È una casa molto vecchia 'It's a very old house'* or similar.

If at the same time we go down the scale in (18), the differences become more significant. If instead of the countable constituent in the singular, *house*, we choose a mass constituent as *wine*, we get constructions, extensional (37) and intensional (38), such as:

(37) Gianna ci ha venduto del vino una settimana fa. *[Ø]* non era italiano.
'Gianna sold us some wine a week ago. *[Ø = It]* was not Italian'.

(38) Gianna vende vino da parecchi anni. $^{?}$*[Ø]* non è italiano.
'Gianna has sold *wine* for several years. $^{?}$*[Ø = It]* is not Italian'.

Even if the unmarked anaphor after the intensional antecedent in (38) is rare, it is acceptable. However, if other linguistic material is interposed, as in:

(39) Gianna ci ha venduto del vino una settimana fa dal suo piccolo negozio in centro. *[Ø]* non era italiano.
'Gianna sold us some wine a week ago from her small shop in the centre. *[Ø = It]* was not Italian'.

(40) Gianna vende vino da parecchi anni dal suo piccolo negozio in centro. *??[Ø]* non è italiano.
'Gianna has sold *wine* for several years from her small shop in the centre. *??[Ø = It]* is not Italian'.

The unmarked anaphor in (40) would be considered too weak and an NP, *il vino 'the wine',* would be preferred – or, again, a different construction such as *Non è vino italiano 'It is not Italian wine'* or similar.

If, on the scale of (18), we go down to second- or third-order constituents, a position very close to the antecedent is essential to an unmarked anaphor, as we saw in example (33). If this is not the case, an unmarked anaphor is no longer able to resume an intensional antecedent, cf. (42), but will require an extensional antecedent, as in (41):

(41) Hanno deciso di muovere un attacco alle postazioni nemiche vicine. *[Ø]* doveva essere molto violento.
'They decided to launch an attack on the enemy positions nearby. *[Ø = It]* had to be very violent'.

(42) Hanno deciso di muovere attacco alle postazioni nemiche vicine. **[Ø] [→ attacco]* doveva essere molto violento.
'They decided to launch [an] attack on the enemy positions nearby. **[Ø] [→ attack]* had to be very violent'.

In cases such as (42), a marked anaphora, *l'attacco 'the attack'*, would be considered necessary.

5. Interphrasal/horizontal factors: text and narrative structure

In several of the cases in the previous subsections, the distance between antecedent and anaphor was crucial to the choice of anaphor material, and especially a textual "barrier" such as a text sequence change can reduce the pragmatic saliency of the antecedent in the new sequence, causing a marked anaphor to be required. Vice versa, a marked anaphor often expresses a pragmatic, textual and/or narrative distance to the antecedent and can therefore be chosen to **create** a barrier, i.e. to signal that there is e.g. a text sequence change, which we shall see below. As we saw in example (29), also a narrative "barrier" such as a topic change can require a marked anaphor, see subsection 5.2.

In the textualisation of a longer non-linguistic input, such an input will typically be perceived and interpreted as a series of discrete units, e.g. "episodes" or "events" (Tomlin 1985: 92), and the division and distinction between them depend on the cognitive perception of the overall sequence. Psychological-cognitive processes control the so-called "attention allocation" (Tomlin 1987), and a change in this, an "attention shift", causes an interruption in the flow of information and creates a psychological barrier or an "episode boundary".

Such an attention shift can be caused by a shift in e.g. time, place, action/event unit, participating persons, etc., and its linguistic coding can consequently consist of e.g. time or space adverbs, *in that moment, after a while, then,* perfective or imperfective verbs, or special (typically marked) anaphors. As long as there is no attention shift of this kind, the flow of information is uninterrupted, and the interlocutor remains in the same cognitive "picture" or mental space. Regarding such "mental spaces", Fauconnier (1994) distinguishes between "Time space", "Space space", "Domain space" and "Hypothetical space", and the linguistic elements that signal shifts between mental spaces are termed space-builders (Fauconnier 1994: 17). Therefore, in many cases a marked anaphor will function as a space-builder.

In the following subsections I cite some examples of such phenomena, which we can define as

interphrasal or "horizontal" factors, i.e. factors linked to the text/or and narrative structure, and their impact on anaphor material.

5.1. Text sequence change

A text sequence change is usually the textual signal of an interruption of the cognitive-psychological attention focus, and, as stated, it is typically caused by a temporal, spatial, personal and/or narrative episode change. In written texts, the shift can be conveyed by a typographical paragraph change and in oral texts by intonation changes and pauses. In written texts, therefore, not infrequently, a change of paragraph coincides with the occurrence of a marked anaphor – whether there is a topic change or topic continuity. Examples (43)-(44) are cases of topic continuity:

(43) Era quasi ora del coprifuoco quando [Ø = De Luca] arrivò in città, e cominciava rapidamente a fare buio. Non [Ø] aveva telefonato a Pugliese perché lo venisse a prendere [...]. Era caldo, l'estate stava finalmente arrivando, e c'era il vento, un vento tiepido a raffiche polverose, che gli incollava alle gambe le falde dell'impermeabile aperto.

De Luca rifletteva, preso completamente da una folla di pensieri che si urtavano e si sovrapponevano, sfuggendo al suo tentativo di metterli in ordine. (Lucarelli 1998a: 79)
'It was almost curfew time when [Ø = De Luca] arrived in the city, and it was rapidly beginning to get dark. [Ø = He] had not phoned Pugliese to come and pick him up [...]. It was hot, summer was finally coming, and there was a wind, a warm wind with dusty gusts, which glued the flaps of the open raincoat to his legs.

De Luca reflected, completely absorbed by a crowd of thoughts that collided and overlapped, escaping his attempt to put them in order'.

(44) [Ø = "L'uomo"] Era di età indefinibile, vestito come un cocchiere: stivali, mantello di cerata, e in testa una bombetta. La sua apparizione inaspettata mise fine a ogni conversazione. [...] Restammo tutti in silenzio, finché, raggiunta che ebbe la pedana, l'uomo si inchinò più volte verso il pubblico [...]. Qualcuno dal fondo gli gridò qualcosa, e lui ribatté prontamente con una frase in dialetto che non riuscii a capire, ma alla quale molti risposero con un applauso.

L'uomo portava vistosi baffi grigi e spioventi, alla tartara, ma i capelli, in contrasto, erano ancora scuri [...]. (Maurensig 1996: 20-21)
'[Ø = The man] was of indefinable age, dressed like a coachman: boots, oilskin cloak, and a bowler hat on his head. His unexpected appearance put an end to all conversation. [...] We all remained silent, until, having reached the platform, the man bowed several times to the audience [...]. Someone from the back shouted something to him, and he promptly replied with a phrase in dialect that I could not understand, but to which many responded with applause.

The man wore a showy grey and sloping moustache, in the Tartar style, but his hair, in contrast, was still dark [...].'

In both cases the linear distance between the last mention of the individual in question, the subject/agent and primary topic (in (43): *[Ø = De Luca], lo, gli 'he', 'him' 'his'*, in (44): *l'uomo, gli, lui 'the man', 'him', 'he'*) and the anaphor in the new text sequence is very short, and yet the marked anaphora was chosen: *De Luca / The man*, signalling the transition to a new sequence, in (43) the transition to a new narrative episode, in (44) the transition to a description of the protagonist. These anaphors function as space-builders.

In the following example, an anaphoric NP with a demonstrative article has been chosen, *Quella strada 'That road'*, probably because of the greater distance between antecedent *(una strada 'a road')* and anaphor and the co-textual presence of other referents (see also example (28) in section 4.1), and

because the antecedent, although text topic, is in a low position on the topicality scale in (20) as a non-human entity:

(45) C'è una strada che a Borgoforte, provincia di Mantova, segue l'argine del Po fino ad un punto in cui il fiume Oglio si innesta nel Po, e lì sull'Oglio c'è uno dei rari ponti di barche rimasti in piedi, tra i tanti che esistevano in queste zone.
Quella strada non è asfaltata, tranne per un tratto iniziale. Intorno ci sono molte vecchie case coloniche in rovina [...]. (Celati 1985: 60, the beginning of the short story *Fantasmi a Borgoforte*)
'There is a road which in Borgoforte, the province of Mantua, follows the bank of the Po to a point where the river Oglio joins the Po, and there on the Oglio there is one of the few pontoon bridges left, among the many that existed in these areas.
That road it is not paved, except for an initial stretch. Around there are many old farmhouses in ruins [...]'.

Such a "double-marked" anaphor (marked lexically and morpho-phonologically, cf. section 3), is a very "strong" anaphor and is often chosen if there are more pragmatical-textual "barriers" to overcome. In the following three cases, the antecedents are all low on the scale of (20) (non-human) and (17): in (46) the antecedent *il libro 'the book'* is object/Patient, and in (47)-(48) the antecedents *una biblioteca 'a library'* and *una cameretta da bambino 'a children's bedroom'* are secondary constituents:

(46) arriva il signore che porta il libro, con molto... diciamo così rispetto, controlla *questo libro* guarda, toglie la polverina, e poi comincia a sfogliarlo (Skytte et al. 1999: IMB3)
'the gentleman who brings the book arrives, with a lot... let's say respect, he checks *this book* he investigates, removes the dust, and then begins to leaf through it'

(47) allora, la scena si svolge in una biblioteca... un signore entra in *questa biblioteca*, ed è-, molto condizionato dal fatto che-, bisogna fare silenzio (Skytte et al. 1999: IMB4)
'well, the scene takes place in a library... a gentleman enters *this library*, and is-, very conditioned by the fact that-, you have to be silent'

(48) Dall'alto della capanna si vede arrivare la statuina di un angelo portata da un elicottero-giocattolo, che si cala dentro e afferra Gesù Bambino, che viene portato insieme ai genitori, in una cameretta da bambino. Davanti a *questa cameretta* passa poi un gendarme-giocattolo. [...] (Skytte et al. 1999: ISB2)
'From the top of the hut you can see the statue of an angel brought by a toy helicopter, which descends inside and grabs the Baby Jesus, who is carried together with his parents in a children's bedroom. In front of *this bedroom* then a toy gendarme passes by. [...]'

In (46)-(47), the two oral retellings, the text sequence change is signalled by a pause (in the transcription indicated by a comma and three full stops respectively), and in (48), a written retelling of the Mr. Bean episode "Merry Christmas Mr. Bean", it is indicated by the space adverb *Davanti a questa cameretta 'In front of this bedroom'* and the time adverb *poi 'then'*.

5.2. Topic change

As stated in section 4.0, the hierarchies in (16)-(20) determine the probability that a nominal constituent will obtain topic status in a given sentence or a text sequence, but pivotal for the actual choice of topic in a specific text sequence is, of course, the narrative structure, the narration itself,

and a narration often implies changes of text topics whether there is a text sequence change or not. In section 4.1, example (29), which I repeat here, we saw a case of intrasequential topic change, where a non-topical constituent rose in "rank" and became topic:

(29) prima di uscire devono appunto consegnare il libro, *il libro* viene visto dal guardiano se è in buona condizione, poi escono [...] (Skytte et al. 1999, IMB2)
'before leaving they must return the book, *the book* is checked by the guard if it is in a good condition, then they leave [...]'

A topic change implies a shift in the psychological-cognitive attention from one referent to another, a shift which requires a marked anaphor even in an intrasequential position immediately following the antecedent, as in (29). A similar situation appears in (49), which shows a double topic change from *Mr. Bean* to *il foglio 'the sheet'* and back to *Mr. Bean*, both changes marked with NP anaphors:

(49) Nell'atto di ricopiare la sagoma, [Ø = Mr. Bean] non riesce a trattenere uno starnuto che provoca lo sfasciamento del foglio su cui stava disegnando: *il foglio* cade, ma *Mr. Bean* non se ne cura e continua distrattamente a ricalcare direttamente sulle pagine del testo. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA10)
'In the act of copying the silhouette, he [= Mr. Bean] cannot hold back a sneeze that causes the damage of the sheet on which he was drawing: *The sheet* falls down, but *Mr. Bean* does not care and absentmindedly continues to draw directly on the pages of the text'.

The return to a primary topic does not necessarily trigger a marked anaphor. This is seen in (29), where the new topic *il libro 'the book',* in itself a marked anaphor, was resumed with a null anaphor, *se [Ø] è in buona condizione, 'if [Ø = it] is in a good condition',* but after this the narration focus returns to the two readers, who are anaphorised with a null subject: *poi [Ø] escono 'then [Ø = they] leave'.*

Example (50) shows a case of a secondary topic, *la persona addetta 'the person in charge'* (i.e. the librarian), rising in "rank" and becoming topic, replacing the primary topic *un uomo 'a man'* (i.e. Mr. Bean), who before the topic change was "regularly" anaphorised with a null subject: *[Ø] Mostra un foglio alla persona addetta, '[Ø = He] shows a sheet of paper to the person in charge'*. Instead, the topic change requires a marked anaphor even in the position immediately following the antecedent, as in (29), and *la persona addetta* is anaphorised with the marked demonstrative pronoun *questo 'this' [= who];* probably an NP anaphor was considered a marking too "powerful" so close to the antecedent. In the following clause, the focus is maintained on the secondary topic, which is again resumed with a marked anaphor, the stressed personal pronoun *lui, 'he'.* The reference of a null subject in this place would have been unclear *(→ Mr. Bean* or *the librarian).*

(50) Un uomo entra in una biblioteca. [Ø] Mostra un foglio alla persona addetta, *questo* gli fà segno di accomodarsi, mentre *lui* va a prendere il libro richiesto. (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA1)
'A man enters a library. [Ø = He] shows a sheet of paper to the person in charge, *who* [lit.: *the latter*] signals him to take a seat, while *he* goes to fetch the requested book.' (Skytte et al. 1999, ISA1/1-2)

The demonstrative pronoun *questo 'this'* specifies that the antecedent is close by. The two Italian demonstratives *questo – quello 'this – that'* convey the deictic distinction "near" – "distant", respectively.

A topic change can occur within the same text sequence, as in (29) and (49)-(50), but will often occur together with a text sequence change, as is seen in the Danish example in (51), an almost full

account of the Bean episode "The Library":

(51) *Mr. Bean* kommer ind på et bibliotek med gamle bøger, han får at vide af bibliotekaren, en ældre nobel herre, at han ikke må larme [...], han gør i det hele taget alt for at undgå at forstyrre den mand der allerede sidder på biblioteket og læser i en stor gammel bog.

Manden skuler til Mr. Bean, da han pludselig begynder at hikke. For at stoppe hikken prøver Mr. Bean at holde vejret [...]. Hele denne manøvre hjælper dog intet, han hikker stadig.

Bibliotekaren kommer med en bog til Mr. Bean, som tager sine hvide bomuldshandsker på. [...] Mr. Bean river siderne ud af bogen og for at camouflere lyden nyser han samtidig, derefter tager Mr. Bean sin hobbykniv frem og skærer de flossede kanter af. Dette resulterer i at han kommer til at skære bogen op.

Biblioteket lukker og *bøgerne* skal afleveres tilbage. Da den anden mand vender sig væk fra bordet ombytter Mr. Bean bøgerne. [...] (Skytte et al. 1999, DSA5)

'Mr. Bean enters a library with old books, he is told by the librarian, an elderly nobleman, that he must not make any noise [...], he does everything in his power to avoid disturbing the man who is already sitting in the library reading a large old book.

The man scowls at Mr. Bean when he suddenly starts to hiccup. To stop the hiccup, Mr. Bean tries to hold his breath [...]. However, this whole maneuver does not help, he continues to hiccup.

The librarian brings a book to Mr. Bean, who puts on his white cotton gloves. [...] Mr. Bean tears the pages out of the book and to camouflage the sound he sneezes at the same time, then Mr. Bean takes out his hobby knife and cuts off the frayed edges. This results in him cutting the book open.

The library closes and *the books* must be returned. When the other man turns away from the table, Mr. Bean exchanges the books'.

The text in (51) gives examples of both secondary topics rising to a primary position *(manden 'the man', bibliotekaren 'the librarian')* and non-human entities becoming topic *(biblioteket 'the library', bøgerne 'the books'),* and all topic changes imply marked anaphors that function as space-builders.[24] The new topic in the second sequence, *Manden 'The man',* is textualised with an NP anaphor in spite of the very short distance to the last mention, where, however, it was Patient/object, hence low on the scale in (17).

6. Conclusion – and a return to examples (4)-(6)

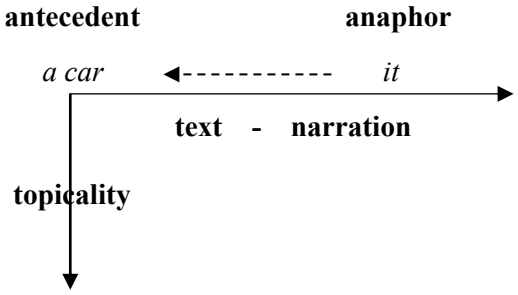
On the basis of the observations in the previous sections and subsections, we can conclude (not surprisingly) that the linguistic marking of an anaphoric expression depends on the interpretability of the anaphoric relation. An anaphor does not need particular linguistic marking if the relation between it and the antecedent is easily interpretable. The anaphoric relation can be considered "easily interpretable" if the antecedent is text-pragmatically prominent at the time it is anaphorised, which means that there are no "barriers" between antecedent and anaphor due to intraphrasal or interphrasal factors.

Intraphrasal factors are related to the topicality, i.e. the pragmatical-topical prominence, of the antecedent in the sentence or text sequence in which it occurs, whereas the interphrasal factors are

[24] Even the topic continuity in the third paragraph, *derefter tager Mr. Bean sin hobbykniv frem 'then Mr. Bean takes out his hobby knife'*, resulted in a marked anaphor, which might seem a case of "over-marking", unless it is meant as a space-builder together with the time adverb *derefter 'then'*, to indicate the shift to a new event unit.

related to the textual and narrative structure and to possible changes in text sequence and/or topic status. Hence, we can talk about "vertical" and "horizontal" criteria respectively, and referring back to Figures 1-2 in section 1, we can graphically describe the factors in this way:

Figure 3. Graphical description of the factors determining anaphor material.



The pragmatical-topical prominence of a nominal constituent, the "vertical" criterion, depends on its position in the five pragmatic, syntactic and semantic hierarchies mentioned in section 4.0, of which the four last scales, (17)-(20), are particularly relevant to anaphoric relations. The further to the left in the four hierarchies an antecedent is placed, the more pragmatically-cognitively prominent it is, and the more easily – i.e. with less linguistic marking – it can be anaphorised. An unmarked anaphor signals the resumption of a pragma-textually prominent entity, and if the antecedent is the topic of the text (sequence) in question, the unmarked anaphor signals topic continuity.

On the other hand, a marked anaphor generally signals a more "difficult" anaphoric relation, i.e. the resumption of an antecedent in a low position in the pragma-textual hierarchies and/or an antecedent found across a "barrier" such as a text sequence change, a topic change or a longer text span, possibly with other text referents causing the risk of semantic interference, the "horizontal" criteria.

We can now return to and clarify the "problematic" cases in the authentic Danish examples (4)-(6) in section 1 above. In (4) we notice that the intended antecedent, *venteliste 'waiting list',* is a secondary constituent, a prepositional complement, and non-human, i.e. in low positions on the syntactic and lexical scale in (17) and (20). Furthermore, it is placed in a subordinate (relative) clause. An unmarked anaphor is therefore not sufficient to anaphorise it, instead such anaphor will inevitably refer to the highest placed potential antecedent, viz. the subject and primary topic *Folk 'People',* cf. the examples (21)-(25) in section 4.1.

An unmarked anaphor has also been used in (5); this text manifests the presence of other referents and thereby a potential semantic interference. The unmarked anaphor will refer to the nearest possible antecedent, which is *ryggen 'his back',* and not the intended antecedent *bolden 'the ball'* in the first clause.

In (6), a marked anaphor, a demonstrative pronoun, has been used, but the problem is that the preceding text contains three potential antecedents, *han, den nu efterlyste mand, hunden 'he, the now wanted man, the dog'.* Evidently, the speaker intended *den nu efterlyste mand 'the now wanted man'* as the antecedent, but having chosen the demonstrative pronoun *denne, 'this',* which specifies the deictic content "near" (see also section 5.2, example (50)), the reference will indicate the nearest possible antecedent, i.e. *hunden 'the dog'.*

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On the verge of tears and the brink of death: A distinctive multivariate analysis of two functionally overlapping idiomatic constructions in English

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Abstract: The two idiomatic constructions *verge of* and *brink of* are often considered overlapping constructions that express impending future events. Moreover, it is held that *brink of* in particular tends to express negative events such as disasters, misfortune, and the like. While both are documented in many dictionaries of English, and *verge of* is sometimes described in English grammars, neither construction had really been systematically studied before Wiliński published a research article in 2017 in which a distinctive collexeme analysis mapped distinctive patterns in the lexical items appearing after *of* in either construction. Taking a step further, the present study, drawing on data from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*, applies a corpus-based multivariate version of distinctive collexeme analysis to the two constructions, which not only takes collexemes into consideration but involves 11 additional variables, such as, for example, the preposition before *verge* and *brink*, semantic prosody, and discourse prosody as well as register. Thus, this article presents usage-based distinctive collo-profiles pertaining to the two constructions that offer more detailed pictures than traditional monovariate analyses can.

Keywords: Association rules analysis, collo-profiling, constructional multidimensionality, impending future constructions, usage-based construction grammar

1. Introduction

English is sometimes described as a language that lacks a genuine future tense, but instead has an impressive array of constructions that encode a wide range of different construals of future events and future temporal relations such as the use of *will* and *shall* as 'neutral' futurity markers; *going to* as a marker of future events certain to happen; the simple present tense to signal scheduled future events; *be to* to indicate future events outside the influence of their AGENTS; or *be about to* to express impending future events. Alternatives to *be about to* are the constructions seen in examples (1-2) below:

(1) By depicting Mary in this manner, writers not only called into question her character, but also left little doubt that Mary – first drawn into the conspiracy by her grasping husband – was equally culpable, if not more so, in bringing Georgia to the brink of ruin. (COCA 2015 ACAD GeorgieHisQ)

(2) Portland Timbers on verge of acquiring center back Claude Dielna. (COCA 2019 NEWS Baltimore Sun)

The idiomatic constructions *brink of* and *verge of* are interesting because, on the face of it, they seem to be semantically synonymous. Both constructions encode impending future events relative to the temporal vantage point. Furthermore, both constructions draw on the same metaphorical conceptualization of TIME in terms of SPACE. However, there are subtle differences between them. It is generally assumed that *brink of* has negative connotations while *verge of* is more neutral. This is something which is mentioned in numerous lexicographical reference works as well as a few grammars of English. In addition, in a very important study, Wiliński (2017) finds that there are usage-patterns in the lexeme-construction interaction which reflect subtle, but important, semantic differences that set the two constructions apart from one another.

The two constructions should be of central interest to construction grammarians as they encapsulate many of the key concerns in construction grammar (e.g. Fillmore et al. 1988; Goldberg 1995;

Croft 2001; Hilpert 2019) such as, for instance, constructional synonymy, idiomaticity, metaphoricity, fixedness and schematicity, and constructional semantics. There has been a recent usage-based turn within not just construction grammar but cognitive linguistics at large. Against this background, we can assume that studying the usage of the two constructions can generate findings that have potentially important implications for our understanding of constructions as such and the relationship between language performance and language competence more broadly. In fact, Wiliński's (2017) study maps some central distinctive usage-patterns that set the constructions apart from one another

Unfortunately, while there are plenty of entries in reference works and grammars of English, the two constructions have not received much attention within construction grammar. Indeed, Wiliński (2017) seems to be the only serious construction-grammatical study of the two expressions. Important though it is, that study applies a monofactorial analysis, which definitely sheds light on the one dimension that it addresses – namely, construction-lexeme. However, it has been pointed out that a multidimensional approach is required if we want a more detailed understanding of constructions. For instance, Herbst (2018) advocates what he calls collo-profiles which subsume multiple features, not just collexemes, associated with constructions. Also, on a more methodological level, Olguín Martínez & Gries (2024) and Jensen & Gries (2025) show that the application of multivariate methods, which allow analysts to address constructions as multidimensional phenomena, generates findings that are very much akin to Herbst's (2018) collo-profiles.

The purpose of this article, then, is to present the findings of a corpus-based analysis of the two constructions, treating them as multidimensional linguistic phenomena. In addition to collexemes (thus acknowledging the importance of Wiliński 2017), this analysis includes 11 further variable dimensions as potential loci of distinctive features (that is, 12 dimensions altogether). Specifically, like in Jensen & Gries (2025), the multivariate data-mining technique of association rules analysis (Hahsler et al. 2005) is applied in this study to identify featural items and relations among them that are distinctive of the two constructions.

The article is organized as follows. In Section 2, basic and important principles from usage-based linguistic theory and construction-grammatical theory are introduced. This section also provides a brief overview of the two constructions and their formal, functional, and symbolic structures. Section 3 describes the method, accounting for the retrieval of usage-data as well as the annotation scheme. The technique of association rules analysis is also described here, and some important methodological disclaimers are issued. Section 4 presents the findings in a manner based on iterative and interactive heuristic sorting and summarizing, while Section 5 outlines the distinctive collo-profiles that emerge from the findings.

2. Construction and usage

2.1 Usage-based linguistics and construction-grammar theorizing

The main theoretical framework of this study is usage-based construction grammar and, more broadly, cognitive linguistics. In construction grammar (e.g. Fillmore et al. 1988; Goldberg 1995; Croft 2001; Hilpert 2019; see also Traugott & Trousdale 2014), constructions – seen as the basic units of grammar – are pairings of form and conventionalized meaning. Constructional form covers syntax, morphology, and phonology, while constructional meaning covers semantics, discourse-pragmatics, and social meaning. Constructions may be formally fixed, formally schematic, or somewhere in between. Also, grammar is not modular. Nor is it the case that some linguistic domains are primary while others are not. Instead, the language system is envisioned as a so-called 'construct-i-con' – a network of constructions organized along the same principles as prototype categories with all information pertaining to a construction stored as part of the construction itself.

Usage-based construction grammar incorporates principles from usage-based language modeling (e.g. Kemmer & Barlow 2000; Bybee & Hopper 2001) into construction-grammar

theorizing. In this perspective, the language system emerges as generalizations over recurring usage patterns: the more frequently a pattern occurs, the more entrenched it becomes in speakers. Because of this experiential nature of language, (i) linguistic performance and linguistic competence are not separated as they continuously influence one another, (ii) language is interconnected with other cognitive systems, and (iii) context plays a crucial role in the operation of the linguistic system (Kemmer & Barlow 2001). In usage-based construction grammar, then, constructions are, as Croft (2005: 274) notes, pairings of form and conventionalized meaning that are entrenched in the speech community. Patten (2014: 91) summarizes all of this quite neatly:

> humans are not innately programmed with grammatical knowledge; instead, all aspects of language are learned from the input (or rather from the speaker's linguistic experiences). Both language learning and language change involve the speaker inductively generalizing over instances to form mental schemas (or constructions) which are represented in the language system. On a usage-based model then, constructions are simply conventionalized chunks of linguistic knowledge… From this, it follows that the storage and organization of grammatical knowledge is dependent on, and can change according to, patterns of use.

Consequently, rather than being neat and simple, constructional networks may contain multiple subconstructions with their own subnetworks, and intra-constructional redundancy can be found anywhere in the network.

Seeing that context is crucial in the operation of the language system, information on contexts where a construction is frequently used is part of speakers' constructional knowledge and thus part of the construction itself. Such contextual features can be anything from recurring co-textual elements and other features of the construction's discursive context to situational and social contexts. This means that, in a usage-based perspective, in order to understand the workings of a construction, it is necessary to consider patterns in the contexts it occurs in as well as its internal structural properties. As Juul (2020: 36) argues, calling for more context-sensitive studies of structural variants, it is necessary to seriously consider contextual patterns as fundamental elements of speakers' linguistic competence.

With this in mind, it arguably makes sense to reintroduce Fillmore's (1988: 36-37) distinction between internal and external constructional properties back into construction grammar. The former covers formal, semantic, and symbolic structures, and the latter covers recurring contextual patterns. Both types of properties are equally essential to a construction, so it is not the case that internal ones are primary and external ones are secondary. The distinction has to do with where, relative to the structure of the construction, the properties are found. Both types of property are *bona fide* constructional properties, and features that define the construction and set it apart from other constructions may be found among both the internal properties and the external properties.

In sum, then, a construction is a pairing of form and conventionalized meaning that is entrenched in a speech community and whose properties include not just structure-internal ones but also recurring contextual elements, which, through the principle of frequency, are also part of speakers' knowledge of the construction.

2.2 The two constructions

While, as Wiliński (2017) points out, the contrast between the two constructions under investigation has received very little attention, *verge of* is occasionally covered in descriptive grammars of English. Here it is typically treated under the heading of 'futurity' or 'future reference'. More specifically, *verge of*, typically conflated with *on the point of*, is often classified, along with *be about to*, as a so-called future reference construction which indicates events in the immediate future (e.g. Leech &

Svartvik 1975: 73; Hjulmand & Schwartz 2017: 223). Bringing style into the picture, Carter & McCarthy (2006: 636) classify *verge of* together with *be about to*, *on the point of*, *due to*, *be certain to*, *be likely to*, *be supposed to*, and *be obliged to* as forms that enable "reference to future events treated as occurring immediately or in the near future"[1] and are "mainly used in more formal contexts".

Focusing on variants of the two constructions where the position after *of* is filled by a noun, Wiliński (2017: 432) writes that they are "near-equivalent expressions [that] are used to refer to a point at which a situation or an event, usually an unwelcome one, is about to happen or very likely to happen". Wiliński (2017: 432-433) uses entries from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (7th ed.) and the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2nd ed.) to corroborate this and further adds that *brink of* carries negative connotations while *verge of* seems more neutral and can be used with both negative and positive nouns such as *tears* and *success*. *Merriam-Webster*'s entries on the two constructions further corroborate this with *verge of* defined simply as "the point when (something) is about to happen or is very likely to happen" (Merriam-Webster n.d. a) while *brink of* is defined as "a point that is very close to the occurrence of something very bad or (less commonly) very good" (Merriam-Webster n.d. b).

Both have the same syntactic structure: a preposition followed by a noun phrase in which another preposition is followed by another noun phrase. Both are partially schematic and partially fixed: *verge of* and *brink of* are fixed, but what appears after *of* is lexically open. Wiliński (2017: 432) suggests that *verge of* also displays variability in terms of the preposition, as *on* can sometimes be replaced with *in*. In example (2) above, we see that the preposition may also be left out. Example (1) suggests that *brink of* similarly displays variability in terms of the preposition, as the preposition in that example is *to* rather than *on*. Note also that *the* is absent in (2), suggesting variability in the determiner that precedes *verge*. Since (2) is a headline from a news report, the absence of both the preposition and the determiner illustrate how the construction conforms to the conventions of the headlinese register (Hughes & McArthur 1992). Lastly, while Wiliński (2017) specifies the position after *of* as being a noun, we see that it is actually a verb in (2). As it happens, some grammars of English even characterize *verge of* as a verbal construction where *of* is followed by a verb in the *ing*-form (e.g. Hjulmand & Schwarz 2017). Based on these considerations, we can generalize the syntactic structures along the lines of [PREP D *verge of* X] and [PREP D *brink of* X], 'X' simply indicating not just lexical schematicity but also openness in terms of word class.

Brink of and *verge of* are semantically similar idioms. Both draw on the same basic TIME IS SPACE metaphor (Wiliński 2017: 431). Here, the TEMPORAL VANTAGE POINT is conceptualized as a BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO AREAS, and the IMPENDING FUTURE EVENT is conceptualized as THE AREA BEYOND THE BOUNDARY. They differ in terms of the nature of the boundary though, as a verge is just the outer rim of an area, while a brink is the extreme edge of land (like the vertical extreme of a slope or a cliff) or the edge between land and a body of water. Consequently, there is more danger associated with a brink than a verge, and this may well feed into the negative connotations of the *brink of* construction. According to semantic prosody theory (e.g. Bublitz 1996; Hunston & Francis 1999; Stubbs 2001), then, we can expect *brink of* to occur more frequently with negatively leaning lexemes in the X-position, while *verge of* should not have a preference in terms of this.

Wiliński (2017), applying a distinctive collexeme analysis (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004), which identifies inter-constructional differences in terms of collexemic attraction patterns, indeed finds that *brink of* tends to occur with nouns that express negative or unpleasant situations like, for instance,

[1] It has to be said that this classification is unfortunate as it conflates immediacy with obligation, which are arguably ontologically different categories.

war, *disaster*, *death*, *ruin*, and *insolvency*, while *verge of* occurs with both negatively leaning nouns like *tears*, *collapse*, and *breakdown*, and positively leaning ones, like *success*, *victory*, and *laughter*.

3. Data and method

This study is based on the 2010-2019 portion of Davies' (2008-) *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (henceforth, COCA), which contains 248,145,425 word tokens and represents the registers ACADEMIC, FICTION, MAGAZINES, MOVIES, NEWS, SPOKEN, and TV. The simple search string `brink|verge of`, which retrieves all instances of *brink of* and *verge of* in the corpus, was used. After duplicates were weeded out, there were 1023 concordance lines altogether: 412 instances of *brink of* and 611 instances of *verge of*. While not incredibly large, this is an exhaustive dataset in that it represents all instances of the two constructions in the 2010-2019 portion of COCA.

Since we are interested in addressing potential differences between the two constructions, a traditional distinctive collexeme analysis (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004) was performed, much like in Wiliński (2017), except this analysis is not restricted to nouns after *of*. Table 1 lists the Top 10 most distinctive collexemes according to log-likelihood ratio (Gries 2024 was used to carry out this calculation).

Table 1. Top 10 distinctive collexemes

Rank	Collexeme	Preference	LLR
1	war	brink of	45.9222
2	extinction	brink of	19.8792
3	tear	verge of	19.3761
4	crisis	brink of	14.6452
5	elimination	brink of	12.6459
6	death	brink of	12.3230
7	disaster	brink of	8.0869
8	lose	verge of	7.6865
9	conflict	brink of	7.2991
10	become	verge of	6.8816

Some interesting observations can indeed be made from this. Firstly, this analysis is very much in line with Wiliński's (2017) findings. For instance, like in Wiliński's study, *tears* is most strongly attracted to *verge of* while *war* has a strong preference for *brink of*. Moving beyond Wiliński's study, our analysis further shows that only *verge of* is preferred by verbs (namely, *lose* and *become*) while all the collexemes that prefer *brink of* in the Top 10 are nouns. Also, apart from *become*, all the collexemes express very negative situations. These observations are indeed illuminating.

However, if you take another look at (1-2), you will see that there are more potential loci of distinctiveness than the collexemes after *on*. For example, we already know that there is variability in terms of the preposition, the determiner of *verge*, and the word class of the collexeme. Furthermore, while *ruin* belongs to a semantic field of DESTRUCTION and is clearly negatively leaning, *acquiring* cannot be said to be negative and also belongs to the completely different semantic field of OBTAINMENT. This indicates variability in the semantic class of the collexeme as well. Note also that, in (1), *brink of* appears in a clause structure where the verb is *bring*, which might suggest that there could be variability in the choice of verb whenever at least *brink of* appears in a clause. Finally, the two examples come from different registers: (1) is from the ACADEMIC register, and (2) is from

the NEWS register. Given the usage-based principles of frequency and the importance of context, it makes sense to assume the two constructions might be contrasted not only in terms of collexemes but also in terms of other features, which may well be external constructional properties.

The point of this article is not to criticize traditional monofactorial distinctive collexeme analysis (but see Jensen & Gries 2025), and the importance of Wiliński (2017) is acknowledged and genuinely appreciated as well. However, if we want a more detailed picture of how the two constructions may differ from one another, we need to take a multivariate approach that considers multiple features simultaneously. Therefore, application of a multivariate method is desirable (see also Olguín Martínez & Gries 2024).

That is why, like in Jensen & Gries (2025), the multivariate data-mining technique known as association rules (Hahsler et al. 2005) is applied in this study. Essentially, when applied in the context of collostructional analysis, the method is a three-step process consisting of (i) annotation of concordance lines, (ii) computation of association rules, and (iii) interpretation and presentation of the results.

3.1 Annotation

The first step is to annotate every concordance line for variable categories and their features, or levels. This study makes use of no less than 12 feature categories, some of which have 100+ levels, and this section describes the annotation scheme.

Instances were annotated for COLLEXEMES after *of*. No less than 456 COLLEXEME types were observed in this position. Since one of the supposed differences between the two constructions has to do with the type of situation expressed, it made sense to annotate for SEMANTIC PROSODY and DISCOURSE PROSODY as well. Semantic prosodies are emergent semantic categories among the collocates of a node word or, like in this study, the collexemes of a construction. Discourse prosodies are stance judgments of the situations expressed by the node word or construction in question. Like semantic prosodies, discourse prosodies emerge from collocates and collexemes. For example, Stubbs (2001: 89-95) observes that *undergo* tends to take as direct objects nouns from the semantic fields MEDICINE, EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT, and CHANGE (which then constitute its semantic prosodies) and that these are associated with unpleasant experiences (meaning that *undergo* has negative discourse prosody).[2] Both phenomena are considered prosodic as they extend beyond the individual unit (Stubbs 2001: 65) and are conventionalized as discourse functions associated with the unit in question. While DISCOURSE PROSODY is a ternary category, covering *positive*, *negative*, and *neutral*, SEMANTIC PROSODY subsumes 133 levels.

There are more variables that relate to X-position collexemes. There is variability in word class membership. In addition to nouns and verbs, as seen in (1-2), X-position collexemes may also be adjectives. Consequently, annotating for PART OF SPEECH was found relevant. This category covers *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, and *pronoun*. There is also variability in PHRASE STRUCTURE, with the two only phrase structures observed being *VP* and *NP* (in all examples of adjectives appearing after *of*, the adjective serves as the head of an NP). Due to this PART OF SPEECH and PHRASE STRUCTURE variability,

[2] For more on semantic prosody and discourse prosody, see Bublitz (1996), Hunston & Francis (1999), Jensen (2017, 2025), Louw (1993), Partington (2004), Stubbs (2001), and Tognini-Bonelli (2001). The terminology used in this article diverges from the traditional terminology. What is called 'semantic prosody' in this paper is traditionally called 'semantic preference', and what is called 'discourse prosody' in this paper is traditionally called 'semantic prosody'. The reason behind this is that, in my opinion, the traditional distinction between 'semantic preference' and 'semantic prosody' is misleading. In fact, only semantic preference has to do with semantics. 'Semantic prosody', being a matter of stance, is ultimately more of a discourse-pragmatic phenomenon. Also, both phenomena are prosodic, so why only call one of them 'prosody'?

it made sense to also include the basic meaning categories from Croft's (2001: 84-104) conceptual space approach to word classes in the annotation scheme. CROFTIAN MEANING covers the very basic types of concept expressed by a linguistic unit; that is, whether it expresses an *object*, a *property*, or an *action*.[3]

In cases where the collexeme appears in NP structures, variability was observed with regards to the determiner. In addition to the *zero-determiner* in (1) such nominal collexemes also occurred with the *definite article*, a *demonstrative pronoun*, the *indefinite article*, an *indefinite pronoun*, or a *possessive pronoun* as the DETERMINER. Similarly, with verbal structures, variability was observed and annotated for in connection with DIATHESIS, as both *active* – as seen in (2) – and *passive* voice realizations were observed.

As seen in (1-2), there is also variability in terms of the DETERMINER of *brink* and *verge*, meaning that this was also annotated for, with the category levels being *definite article*, *indefinite article*, and *zero-determiner*. To distinguish between this and the collexeme determiner mentioned above, we will refer to this as DETERMINER_1 and the collexeme determiner as DETERMINER_2. We also know that there is variability in terms of the preposition in front of *brink* and *verge*. Therefore, the concordance lines were also annotated for PREPOSITION, the levels here being *along*, *at*, *beyond*, *from*, *in*, *near*, *on*, *to*, and *toward*. Like we also saw in connection with (1-2), there may be variability in the VERB in the clause that the two constructions occur in whenever they do appear in clauses, so this was annotated for too. This category subsumes 75 levels.[4]

Finally, concordance lines were also annotated for REGISTER, the features here being the registers of the portion of the corpus used for this study – namely, *ACADEMIC*, *FICTION*, *MAGAZINES*, *MOVIES*, *NEWS*, *SPOKEN*, and *TV*.

The sets of levels under each variable category are exhaustive as they represent no more and no less than what is observed in the corpus. For instance, the reason why only *noun*, *adjective*, *verb*, and *pronoun* are features under PART OF SPEECH and not, say, *adverb* is that adverbs were not observed in the dataset. Whenever a category did not apply, the annotation *NONE* was used.

As an example of the application of the annotation scheme consider the following:

(3) Peyton Manning is on the verge of setting two more NFL records, one of which will likely come in Denver's opening drive, if not opening play (COCA 2015 NEWS Denver)

The COLLEXEME after *verge of* is *set* which, in terms of PART OF SPEECH, is a *verb* in a *VP* PHRASE STRUCTURE, and it is in the *active* voice when it comes to DIATHESIS. The SEMANTIC PROSODY of *set* here is *SUCCESS*, and the DISCOURSE PROSODY is obviously *positive*. The basic CROFTIAN MEANING of the collexeme is *action*. DETERMINER_1 is the *definite article*, while the PREPOSITION is *on*, and the construction here appears in a clause in which the VERB is a form of *be*. Finally, the usage-event occurs in the *NEWS* REGISTER. Table 2 summarizes the annotation of (3).

[3] Croftian meanings are prototypically associated with speech act functions, word classes, and phrase structures. For instance, verbal structures prototypically express actions via the function of predication, and nominal structures prototypically express objects through the function of reference. However, in marked uses, there will be a discrepancy between the word class and speech act function on the one hand and the meaning on the other, such that, for instance, a noun may express an action, or a verb may express an object. I could also have annotated for CROFTIAN SPEECH ACT FUNCTIONS, but that would overlap 100% with the phrase structure annotation and unnecessarily complicate the annotation scheme.

[4] Please keep in mind that *verb* and VERB are different: in italics, it is the category feature within the PART OF SPEECH category, and, in small caps, it is the variable of lexical units serving as verbs in clauses in which *verge of* and *brink of* occur.

Table 2. Features assigned to (3)

Variable	Feature
VERB	*be*
DETERMINER$_1$	*definite article*
PREPOSITION	*on*
COLLEXEME	*set*
SEMANTIC PROSODY	*SUCCESS*
DISCOURSE PROSODY	*positive*
PHRASE STRUCTURE	*VP*
PART OF SPEECH	*verb*
DETERMINER$_2$	*NONE*
DIATHESIS	*active*
CROFTIAN MEANING	*action*
REGISTER	*NEWS*

As should be clear to the reader, the annotation scheme is mainly inductive and based on observed variation among the usage-events retrieved from the corpus. The reason is that this is an exploratory study anchored in usage-based theory, and we can therefore assume that contextual patterns may turn out to be constructionally distinctive. However, apart from COLLEXEME, SEMANTIC PROSODY, and DISCOURSE PROSODY, we do not yet have an idea about exactly what contextual categories may be distinctive. This is a natural part of exploratory studies, and the findings are often what identifies relevant and irrelevant features. By the same token, of course, this study cannot be said to provide the full picture: there may well be relevant contextual features left out. For instance, sociolinguistic variables like AGE, GENDER, and LOCAL VARIETY could be relevant, but, unfortunately, this information is not provided in this particular corpus. Also, there may well be co-textual features too that this study has not taken into consideration that might be important as well.

3.2 Association rules

Association rules analysis (Hahsler et al. 2005) is used to discover patterned relations among multiple items in complex datasets, and an association rule has the form of conditional statement. For example, association rules can be used to show the probability of guests at a fast-food restaurant buying a product based on other products they also buy. If many customers who buy hamburgers, fries, ketchup, and hotdogs also tend to buy soft drinks, then a corresponding association rule would be:

If hamburger: *yes*
fries: *yes*
ketchup: *yes*
hotdog: *yes*
then soft drink: *yes*

The four protases (i.e. the four *if*-elements) constitute the left-hand side (LHS) of the association rule and the apodosis (i.e. the *then*-element) constitutes the right-hand side (RHS).

An association rule's probability is typically measured via three values:

- Support: the proportion of items in the dataset that the rule applies to (i.e. how many out of all purchases in the fast-food restaurant were purchases of hamburgers, fries, ketchup, hotdogs, and soft drinks?).
- Confidence: the proportion of all the times the RHS occurs with the LHS out of all occurrences of the LHS (i.e. how many out of all purchases of hamburgers, fries, ketchup and hotdogs were also purchases of soft drinks?). This way, confidence is essentially the number of times that the rule is correct.
- Lift: the ratio of the observed support to the expected support if LHS and RHS were completely independent of one another. A value of 1 indicates independence, and any value above 1 indicates the degree of probability of RHS occurring if LHS occurs.

In this study, association rules analysis is applied to the variable category levels accounted for in Section 3.1. To calculate the association rules, the Apriori algorithm in the R package `arules` (Hahsler et al. 2005) was used. Following Jensen & Gries (2025), a minimum support threshold was set to 0.01 to maximize the recall of rules, and a minimum confidence threshold was set to 0.5 ensuring that only rules that are correct at least 50% of the time were included. With these screening parameters in place, 310,558 rules were generated and sorted according to lift. However, as is always the case in association rules analysis, a large number of these rules were redundant and thus not necessary. Rule redundancy occurs when the LHS of a more specific rule is included as a subset of the LHS of a more general rule with a confidence value the same as, or higher than, that of the specific rule. Redundant rules must be filtered out, and this was done using the `is.redundant` function in `arules`. 5,330 rules survived this process. Lastly, all rules with other items than *verge of* and *brink of* in the RHS were filtered out, resulting in 807 rules, so as to focus only on contrasts between the two constructions.

For the sake of illustration, Table 3 shows an example of one of the 807 association rules.

Table 3. An association rule

Construction	*verge of*
VERB	
DETERMINER$_1$	
PREPOSITION	*on*
COLLEXEME	
SEMANTIC PROSODY	
DISCOURSE PROSODY	*neutral*
PHRASE STRUCTURE	
PART OF SPEECH	
DETERMINER$_2$	
DIATHESIS	*active*
CROFTIAN MEANING	*action*
REGISTER	*FICTION*
Frequency	29
Support	0.0283
Confidence	0.9063
Lift	1.5173

This rule shows the following. There are 29 occurrences of this rule in the dataset out of 32 ($^{29}/_{0.9063}$) instances of the configuration PREPOSITION *on*, DISCOURSE PROSODY *neutral*, DIATHESIS *active*, CROFTIAN MEANING *action*, and REGISTER *fiction*. Consequently, the support is $0.0283 \approx {}^{29}/_{1023}$ and the confidence is $0.9063 \approx {}^{29}/_{32}$. The lift value shows that the rule occurs around 1.5 times as many as expected by chance. There is an built-in agnosticism in the rule as well when it comes to all other variables: the rule states that, if PREPOSITION is *on*, DISCOURSE PROSODY is *neutral*, DIATHESIS is *active*, CROFTIAN MEANING is *action* and REGISTER is *FICTION*, then – regardless of the values of VERB, DETERMINER_1, SEMANTIC PROSODY, PHRASE STRUCTURE, and DETERMINER_2 – the preferred construction is *verge of*.

Since there are 807 association rules with 12 variable categories and multiple category levels each, it is necessary to present findings using interactive and iterative heuristic sorting and summarizing via prose. The alternative would be one massive table with 807 rows, 12 columns and literally thousands of data points, and this would be overwhelming and not very helpful at all.

3.3 Some methodological disclaimers

Some disclaimers to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings in readers must be issued before we proceed to presenting the findings.

Firstly, while association rules analysis and Gries & Divjak's (2009) behavioral profiling analysis both involve concordance line annotation for multiple variable categories and levels, they are far from the same. In addition to involving completely different statistics, behavioral profiling addresses occurrence of multiple features but association rules analysis addresses co-occurrence of multiple features, and so they belong to two different categories of multivariate analysis (Gries 2010: 340-342). That is, association rules analysis shows not only that features x, y, and z are often used with Construction A, but also that x and y, when appearing together, prefer Construction A, but, although all three features often used with Construction A, whenever y and z occur together, they actually prefer Construction B. In this study, while the point is not at all to argue for association rules being superior, behavioral profiling would not be an appropriate method because it involves agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis, and this study only compares two constructions. Cluster analysis of two items would be completely pointless for obvious reasons.

Secondly, despite the dataset being relatively small, it is not a simple dataset. In fact, it is a very complex dataset due to the many variable categories and category levels that are included in the study. There are 12 variable categories, and some of these contain 100+ levels. Hence any accusations of the dataset being (made) simple to make sure that the method actually works would betray a lack of understanding of dataset complexity and the purpose of association rules analysis. Association rules analysis was actually developed to handle very complex datasets with numbers of items that would overwhelm most other algorithms, so using a simplified dataset to make sure the method works would be pointless.

Thirdly, association rules analysis is, as mentioned above, an exploratory method. It does not involve hypothesis-testing. In other words, association rules analysis is not a matter of falsification or verification. Like with all other exploratory methods, validation of findings would consist in application of the same method to further datasets and comparing the results for overlaps and divergences.

Fourthly, one might protest that this study only addresses recurring patterns in the context surrounding the two constructions and not really the two constructions themselves. However, as mentioned above, this study adopts a usage-based perspective in which recurring contextual patterns may be entrenched as part of speakers' linguistic competence as *bona fide* external constructional properties. Consequently, as already mentioned above, looking at recurring contextual patterns equals looking at the construction itself.

4. Findings

As mentioned earlier, the findings will be presented and discussed via summarizing based on iterative and interactive heuristic sorting. However, as a starting point, consider Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 isolates all the rules in which a COLLEXEME prefers *brink of*.

Table 4. Rules with COLLEXEMES that prefer *brink of*

VERB								
DETERMINER$_1$								
PREPOSITION								
COLLEXEME	*collapse*	*death*	*extinction*	*extinction*	*war*	*war*	*war*	*war*
SEMANTIC PROSODY								
DISCOURSE PROSODY								
PHRASE STRUCTURE								
PART OF SPEECH								
DETERMINER$_2$			*zero*				*zero*	
DIATHESIS								
CROFTIAN MEANING								
REGISTER	*NEWS*				*NEWS*	*SPOK*		
Support	0.0108	0.0215	0.0274	0.0274	0.0117	0.0137	0.0352	0.043
Confidence	0.5789	0.7097	0.7778	0.7568	1	0.875	0.9231	0.8462
Lift	1.4375	1.7621	1.9312	1.879	2.483	2.1726	2.292	2.101
Frequency	11	22	28	28	12	14	36	44

There is only one COLLEXEME that is distinctive on its own – namely, *death*. The three other COLLEXEMES appear in distinctive configurations with other features. *Collapse* prefers *verge of* in the *NEWS* register, whereas *extinction* appears in a rule along with *zero* DETERMINER$_2$. *War*, while solidly preferring the construction, is not distinctive on its own, as it tends to prefer the construction when DETERMINER$_2$ is *zero*, or when appearing in the *NEWS* and *SPOKEN* REGISTERS.

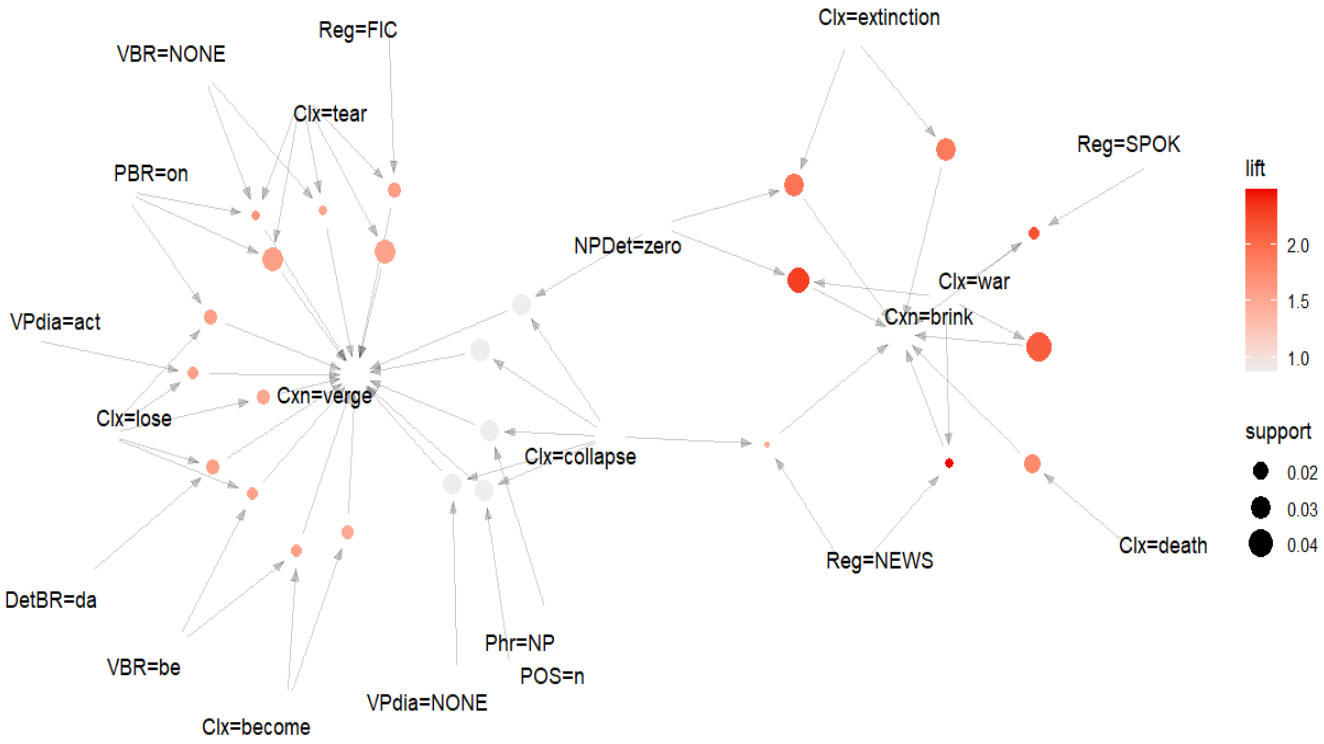
Table 5. COLLEXEMES that prefer *verge of*

VERB	*be*										*be*			*NONE*		*NONE*	
DETERMINER$_1$										*definite article*							
PREPOSITION									*on*					*on*	*on*		
COLLEXEME	*become*	*become*	*collapse*	*collapse*	*collapse*	*collapse*	*collapse*	*lose*	*lose*	*lose*	*lose*	*lose*	*tear*	*tear*	*tear*	*tear*	*tear*
SEMANTIC PROSODY																	
DISCOURSE PROSODY																	
PHRASE STRUCTURE						*NP*											
PART OF SPEECH					*noun*												
DETERMINER$_2$				*zero*													
DIATHESIS			*NONE*					*active*									
CROFTIAN MEANING																	
REGISTER													*fiction*				
Support	0.0137	0.0147	0.0264	0.0254	0.0264	0.0264	0.0283	0.0137	0.0156	0.0156	0.0137	0.0156	0.0166	0.0117	0.0323	0.0117	0.0323
Confidence	0.9333	0.8824	0.5192	0.5200	0.5192	0.5192	0.5179	0.9333	0.9412	0.9412	0.9333	0.8889	0.9444	1.0000	0.9429	0.9231	0.9167
Lift	1.5627	1.4773	0.8694	0.8706	0.8694	0.8694	0.8671	1.5627	1.5758	1.5758	1.5627	1.4883	1.5813	1.6743	1.5786	1.5455	1.5348
Frequency	14	15	27	26	27	27	29	14	16	16	14	16	17	12	33	12	33

Table 5 isolates all rules where COLLEXEMES prefer *verge of*. Note that *collapse* also appears in this table, but here it appears in configurations along with *zero* as DETERMINER$_2$, *noun* as PART OF SPEECH, and *NP* as PHRASE STRUCTURE as well as *NONE* as DIATHESIS. This shows that *collapse* is attracted to both constructions, but in the company of different other features. *Tear* prefers *verge of* but especially in the *FICTION* REGISTER or with *on* as the PREPOSITION as well as *NONE* as VERB. Similarly, *lose* prefers the construction particularly in the context of *be* as VERB, the *definite article* as DETERMINER$_1$, *active* voice as DIATHESIS, or *on* as PREPOSITION. *Become* also is associated with the construction in conjunction when the VERB is *be*.

The information in Tables 4 and 5 is summarized in Figure 1 which was generated using the `arulesViz` package in R. In this type of visualization, rules are represented by vertices, or bubbles, in the graph. Size indicates confidence value (the bigger the bubble, the higher the confidence), and color indicates lift value (the redder the bubble, the higher the lift). Arrows pointing from labels towards vertices indicate LHS, and arrows pointing from vertices towards labels indicate RHS. Since there are only two RHS items in this study – namely *verge of* and *brink of* (labeled 'Cxn=verge' and 'Cxn=brink' in the graph respectively) – the RHS-indicating arrows create two convergences, which gives us a good idea of how the features relate to the constructions (in this figure, Cxn=verge is the convergence to the left, and Cxn=brink is the one to the right).

Figure 1. Visualization of rules with COLLEXEMES in LHS



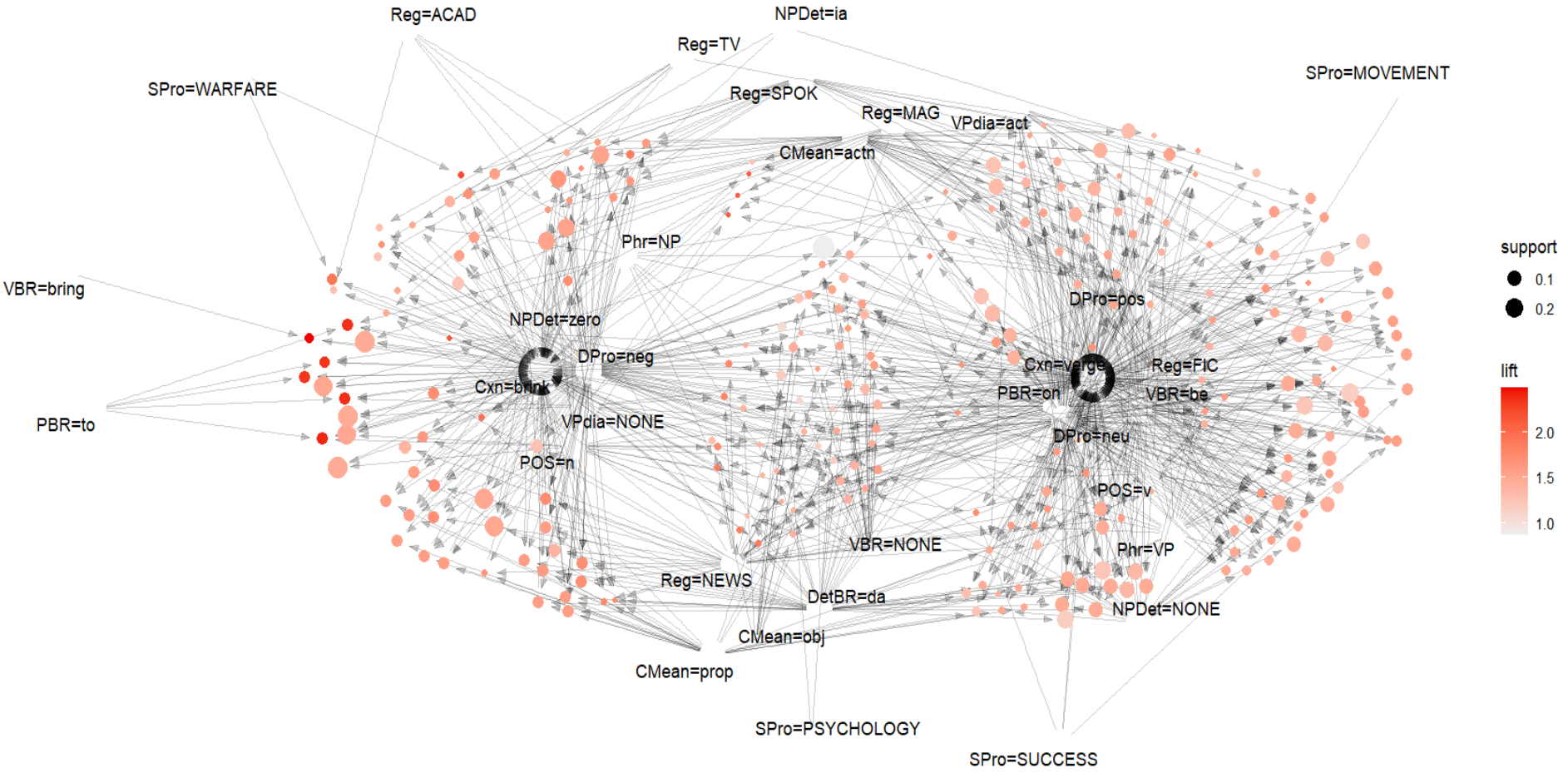
For example, the COLLEXEME *collapse* ('Clx=collapse') appears between the two convergences with arrows pointing in the direction of both of them. As you can see, there is an arrow pointing from

collapse to a small vertex which is also connected to the *NEWS* REGISTER ('Reg=NEWS'). This represents the rule in Table 3 in which *collapse* and *NEWS* form a distinctive configuration that prefers *brink of*. You also see that *collapse* links to several vertices with arrows pointing towards *verge of*. These represent the rules from Table 5 where *collapse* forms distinctive configurations with *zero* as DETERMINER$_2$ ('NPDet=zero'), *noun* as PART OF SPEECH ('POS=n'), and *NP* as PHRASE STRUCTURE ('Phr=NP') as well as *NONE* as DIATHESIS ('Vida=NONE') respectively. There is also an arrow pointing to a vertex with no other labels connecting to it. This represents the rule were *collapse* is the sole LHS-element. Note also how *death*, *war*, and *extinction* are linked to *brink of* and how *war* also points to rules also including the *NEWS* and *SPOKEN* REGISTERS, indicating the distinctive configurations in Table 4 where *war* is distinctive along with these two registers.

There is definitely some overlap between Tables 4 and 5 (and Figure 1) on the one hand and Table 1 (and also Wiliński 2017) on the other. However, the number of distinctive collexemes is much smaller in Tables 4 and 5 which in turn reveal some potentially vital details left out in the monofactorial analysis in Table 1, such as the association between certain COLLEXEMES and REGISTERS with *brink of*. Also, since there are 807 rules altogether, but only 25 of them involve COLLEXEMES, it logically follows that there are multiple non-collexemic variables that are distinctive. This is something that the analysis in Table 1 obviously would not be able to account for.

If we expand the scope from only COLLEXEME to also include SEMANTIC PROSODY and DISCOURSE PROSODY, there do not seem to be any preferences in terms of DISCOURSE PROSODY, as all three DISCOURSE PROSODY levels appear in configurations associated with either construction. However, Figure 2 indicates that the DISCOURSE PROSODIES are not equally associated with the two constructions. The figure obviously contains much information as it summarizes all rules with a DISCOURSE PROSODY feature as an LSH element. There are 257 such rules, and in the vast majority of them, the DISCOURSE PROSODY features are part of multi-featural configuration.

Figure 2. Visualization of rules with DISCOURSE PROSODY in LHS



Thus, the figure is admittedly cluttered, but it is possible to gleam some fundamental details from it. Importantly, *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY ('DPro=neg') leans more towards *brink of*. As you can see in Figure 2, DPro=neg is located just to the right of Cxn=brink, and it links to a range of features that are primarily associated with *brink of* as well (mainly the ones located to the left of Cxn=brink, which is the convergence to the left in this figure) and also some that are associated with both constructions (mainly the ones located in the space between Cnx=brink and Cxn=verge). In contrast, both *neutral* and *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODIES ('DPro=neu' and 'DPro=pos' respectively) lean towards *verge of*, as they are located near the Cxn=verge (more specifically, just underneath it and above it respectively. Also note that Cxn=verge is the convergence to the right). Both features link to other features primarily associated with *verge of* (located mainly to the right of Cxn=verge) and associated with both constructions (located in the middle between Cxn=verge and Cxn=brink). Arguably, it does seem that *brink of* is associated with negative connotations, while *verge of* leans towards more neutral and positive ones. The DISCOURSE PROSODIES are simply just not distinctive on their own but in conjunction with other features. *Negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY prefers *brink of* generally, but particularly in the following contexts:

- the *ACADEMIC* and *TV* REGISTERS,
- the CROFTIAN MEANING of *property*,
- *bring* as the VERB and *to* as the PREPOSITION.

The *SPOKEN* REGISTER also prefers *brink of* with *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY, but, with *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODY, the preferred construction is *verge of*. Only two SEMANTIC PROSODIES are distinctive on their own – namely, *CAUSATION* and *VERBIAGE* both of which prefer *verge of*. We see examples in (4-5) below:

(4) We are on the verge of making America great again. (COCA 2017 MOVE Get Me Roger Stone)
(5) I was on the verge of telling him he couldn't stay and make me go to the sideboard where I kept a spare key. (COCA 2015 AntiochRev)

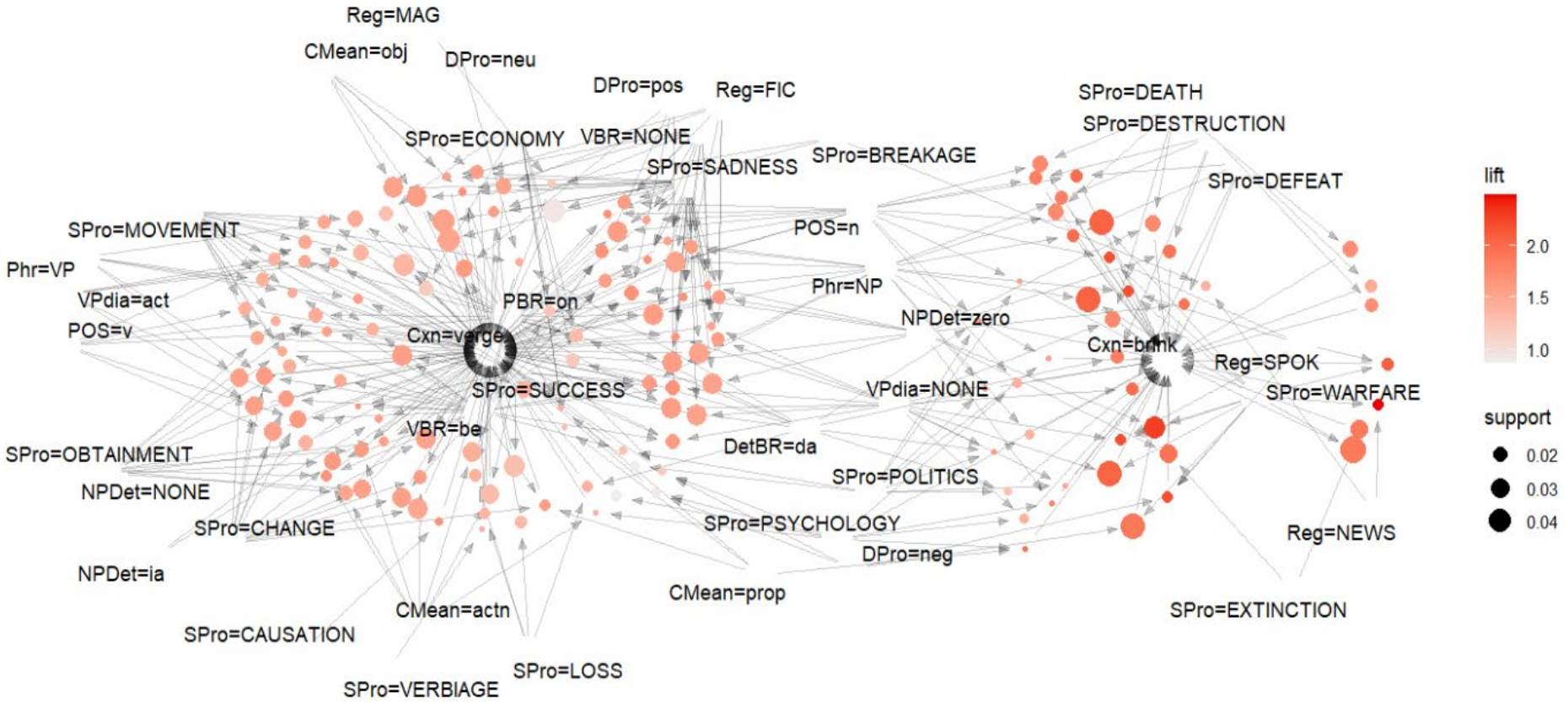
In (4), the COLLEXEME is *make*, which is used in its causative sense, which is reflected in its argument structure construction where the object complement expresses the RESULTANT STATE to which the referent of the direct object is caused to change. The example in (5) is a fairly typical instance of *verge of* in contexts of the SEMANTIC PROSODY *VERBIAGE*. It encodes a scenario in which the AGENTIVE participant is just about to produce an utterance. This example shows that the impending future event, in this case the utterance, can be canceled before it takes place. The SEMANTIC PROSODIES *CHANGE*, *ECONOMY*, *VERGE*, *SADNESS*, *OBTAINMENT*, and *SUCCESS* also prefer *verge of*, but all in distinctive configurations and not as distinctive features on their own:

- *SUCCESS*, *OBTAINMENT*, and *MOVEMENT* with CROFTIAN MEANING *action*,
- *ECONOMY* with CROFTIAN MEANING *property*,
- *CHANGE* with CROFTIAN MEANINGS *property* and *action*,
- *SADNESS* with CROFTIAN MEANING *object* (this is the only SEMANTIC PROSODY that prefers *verge of* with CROFTIAN MEANING *object*) or with REGISTER *FICTION* (none of the other SEMANTIC PROSODIES form configurations with REGISTERS).

SEMANTIC PROSODIES that prefer *verge of* tend to also occur with *on* as the PREPOSITION and *be* as the VERB. In fact, *verge of* as such is not preferred by any other VERBS or PREPOSITIONS. These interactions are captured in Figure 3, which also shows that *CHANGE* and *MOVEMENT* are further associated with *verb* and *VP* in connection with *verge of*. As you can see in the figure, which admittedly does contain much information (this time summarizing 145 rules – namely, the ones with SEMANTIC PROSODY IN LHS), *CHANGE* ('SPro=CHANGE') and *MOVEMENT* ('SPro=MOVEMENT') are situated to the left of Cxn=verge (in this figure Cxn=verge is the convergence to the left). They link to vertices that are also linked to by *verb* and *VP* ('POS=v' and 'Phr=VP' respectively), representing rules where *verge of* is preferred by configurations containing *CHANGE* or *MOVEMENT*, *verb*, and *VP*. In contrast, *SUCCESS* ('SPro=SUCCESS') appears with both *VP* and *NP* as PHRASE STRUCTURE well as *verb* and *noun* as PART OF SPEECH but only with *action* as CROFTIAN MEANING ('CMean=actn') – see (6-8) for examples.

(6) Now they're on the verge of securing a free-agent commitment from Kyrie Irving, the first legitimate superstar the franchise has ever signed as an outside free agent. (COCA 2019 MAG Bleacher Report)
(7) We're on the verge of transforming the science of lie detection. (COCA 2016 TV Limitless)
(8) She was on the verge of crying. (COCA 2016 FIC Alive)

Figure 3. Visualization of rules with SEMANTIC PROSODY as LHS



The following SEMANTIC PROSODIES prefer *brink of*:

- *DEATH*, *DEFEAT*, and *DESTRUCTION* with PHRASE STRUCTURE *NP*, PART OF SPEECH *noun*, and *zero* DETERMINER$_2$,
- *EXTINCTION* with *zero* DETERMINER$_2$ but without specifications in terms of PHRASE STRUCTURE and PART OF SPEECH,
- *WARFARE* with PHRASE STRUCTURE *NP*, PART OF SPEECH *noun*, and *zero* DETERMINER$_2$ as well as the *SPOKEN* and *NEWS* registers.

Below are examples of *DEATH*, *DEFEAT*, and *DESTRUCTION* appearing in instances of the construction (see 12-13 for examples with *WARFARE*):

(9) On the brink of death, Mary laments that she had abandoned "the religious doctrine of my own people," which she attributes to the influence of Thomas, who had become an apostate. (COCA 2015 ACAD GeorgieHisQ)
(10) Several other teams put themselves on the brink of elimination by picking up a sixth loss. (COCA 2016 MAG Bleacher Report)
(11) Poaching has taken the Siberian tiger to the brink of extinction, but, since the 80s, their numbers have slowly increased. (COCA 2019 TV Our Planet)

It is also interesting to note, as seen in Figure 4, that the rules where *brink of* is preferred are generally stronger with higher lift values than the ones where *verge of* is preferred. Below, you see examples of the SEMANTIC PROSODY *WARFARE* (and the COLLEXEME *war*) in the *brink of* construction in the *NEWS* and *SPOKEN* REGISTERS respectively:

(12) On brink of civil war. (COCA 2015 NEWS SCMonitor)
(13) Well with the U.S. on the brink of war with Korea and Syria, it's worth asking what would happen if that actually happen [sic], if war broke out? (COCA 2017 SPOK Fox:Tucker Carlson Tonight)

There are other SEMANTIC PROSODIES than *BREAKAGE* that prefer either construction in different distinctive configurations. Here are two examples:

- *POLITICS* prefers *verge of* with VERB *be*, but in the context of PHRASE STRUCTURE *NP*, PART OF SPEECH *noun*, and DETERMINER$_1$ *definite article*,[5] the preferred construction is *brink of*,
- *PSYCHOLOGY* prefers *verge of* with PREPOSITION *on*, CROFTIAN MEANING *action*, and *negative* SEMANTIC PROSODY, but with PHRASE STRUCTURE *NP*, CROFTIAN MEANING *property*, and PART OF SPEECH *noun*, the preferred construction is *brink of*.

The division of PHRASE STRUCTURE and PART OF SPEECH among the two constructions in connection with SEMANTIC PROSODY reflects a broader underlying pattern, as we shall see later.

In terms of VERB, *push* and *teeter* prefer *brink of* without any other featural restrictions,suggesting a particularly strong association between that construction and those VERBS.

[5] In fact, DETERMINER$_1$ is, with one exception, always a *definite article* in multiple configurations and displays preferences for both constructions. The one exception is that the *zero article* alone as DETERMINER$_1$ shows a very weak preference for *verge of*.

In (14-15), we see examples of *teeter* and *push* in the VERB position:

(14) Yossie teetered on the brink of his future, hoping he still had one. (COCA 2019 FIC Sexual and Relationship Therapy)
(15) One illness can push people to the brink of financial ruin. (COCA 2017 MAG MarkeWatch)

These examples show that there is semantic coherence in the metaphor that underlies the construction at the level of the source domain (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980 for more on the structure of conceptual metaphors), which is something that Wiliński (2017) also finds. In (14), the spatial relations between *teeter* (which means BALANCE UNSTEADILY), *on*, and *brink* are very clear, and an image of someone balancing on the edge of a cliff or an abyss is evoked. In fact, *teeter* is very strongly associated with *brink of* to the point that it figures as a single distinctive feature with the confidence of 0.96 and a lift of 2.38. This suggests that *teeter* is perhaps so strongly associated with *brink of* that they may form a more specific subconstruction within the *brink of* constructional network (this would support those dictionaries that list *teeter on the brink of* as a separate idiom). We see something similar in (15) where there is also a strong sense of spatiality within the source domain. This time, the VERB *push* expresses CAUSED MOTION, and the PREPOSITION *to* expresses directionality. That is, (15) evokes imagery in which an object (metaphorically, people) is CAUSED TO MOVE ALONG A PATH TOWARDS AN EDGE in danger of FALLING INTO THE ABYSS (metaphorically, financial ruin). As it happens, *push* is even more strongly attracted to *brink of* according to confidence (1.00) and lift (2.44). *Bring* also prefers *brink of* but in conjunction either *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY or *action* as CROFTIAN MEANING (both rules also have a confidence of 1.00 and a lift of 2.44). An example is seen in (16):

(16) It won't be simple, and it won't be quick. Bringing a state back from the brink of failure never is. (COCA 2018 ACAD Foreign Affairs)

Note again the strong sense of spatiality and motion, but here the MOVEMENT is ALONG A PATH AWAY FROM the metaphorical EDGE and ABYSS as indicated by the PREPOSITION *from* and the directional adverb *back*. Like *push*, *bring* encodes external AGENCY in the sense that the OBJECT (metaphorically, the state in question) is caused to MOVE ALONG THE PATH AWAY FROM THE EDGE AND ABYSS (metaphorically, failure) rather than engaging in self-propelled motion. It is indeed interesting that *teeter*, *push*, and *bring* all have dynamic Aktionsart, because the VERBS that prefer *verge of* are *be* and *seem*, which have stative Aktionsart. Neither *be* nor *seem* is distinctive on its own though. *Be* appears in several distinctive configurations with *on* as PREPOSITION and *definite article* as DETERMINER$_1$. Multiple SEMANTIC PROSODIES and all DISCOURSE PROSODIES with *VP* as PHRASE STRUCTURE and *verb* as PART OF SPEECH appear in configurations with *be*. However, when the SEMANTIC PROSODY is *SUCCESS*, then the preferred PHRASE STRUCTURE is *NP* and the PREFERRED PART OF SPEECH is *noun*. We see an example of this in (17):

(17) But Ingot doesn't want to stop him because she thinks he's on the verge of a breakthrough. (COCA 2016 MOV Dead Rising: Endgame)

Notice the difference in metaphorical spatiality. In this example, there is no sense of movement although (17) also encodes a situation about to occur in the immediate future, and the basic temporal metaphor is similar. We know from Table 5 that the only COLLEXEMES occurring in distinctive configurations with *be* as the VERB are *become* and *lose*:

(18) He starts us in the horror of the present moment, on a frozen lake near the Minnesota-Canada border, where Max is on the verge of becoming just like one of the monsters he tracks down and arrests. (COCA 2017 NEWS Minneapolis Star Tribune)
(19) A lot of records are also on the verge of being lost to the rate at which they are deteriorating, and need to be properly duplicated for the purpose of preservation of the contents of such collection. (COCA 2018 ACAD Library Philosophy Practice)

As with (17), the relation between the impending event and the main participant of the event is static, but the event itself if dynamic in (18-19) as well as in (17). This is something that both constructions have in common: they tend to lean towards the impending future event being dynamic. However, there are also patterns where it is more static and relational. *Seem* prefers *verge of* too, but in particular if CROFTIAN MEANING is *action* as seen in *he seemed on the verge of drafting an obsessive social-media post (COCA 2018 FIC NewYorker)*. What is interesting about this pattern is that *seem*, unlike *be*, has connotations of uncertainty and, consequently, *seem on the verge* of might serve as a type of modal marker emphasizing that the dynamic situation that looms in the near future is possible, probable, or maybe even likely, but it is not certain.

When it comes to PREPOSITION, *at* and *from* prefer *brink of*, but *from* is a distinctive feature on its own whereas *at* forms a distinctive configuration with *zero* DETERMINER$_2$:

(20) Koji even found himself reciting it at the brink of sleep when Yumi would take over, whispering it in his ear. (COCA 2019 FIC MassRev)
(21) And it's brought us back from the brink of war. (COCA 2018 SPOK PBS_Newshour)

Arguably, both *from* and *at* are coherent with the conceptual substance of the source domain of the metaphor underlying *brink of* as an idiomatic construction. (21) and (16) above are very similar, representing the same pattern: VERB *bring* + PREPOSITION *from* + DETERMINER$_2$ *zero*. Both examples also serve as more evidence that the impending event is cancelable. *At* may also be more semantically compatible with *brink of* than *verge of*, as *at* often expresses a spatial relation pertaining to a point while *on* often expresses one pertaining to a surface. Conceptualizing a brink as a point arguably emphasizes the sense of danger and risk even more. This conceptualization probably would not have the same effect in connection with a verge. There is only one PREPOSITION that prefers *verge of* and that is *on*, which appears in many distinctive configurations. Here, it is important to point out that this does not mean that *on* does not occur with *brink of* (see examples 9-14).

(22) In the final episode, a very pregnant Claire is also on the brink of a nuclear war she threatened in order to distract from the fact that many powerful people want her dead. (COCA 2018 MAG Hollywood Reporter)

Nor does it mean that *verge of* does not occur with other PREPOSITIONS, because it does (for instance, it occurs with *at* a handful of times). What it means is simply that *on* has a stronger association with *verge of* than with *brink of*, and *from* and *at* have stronger associations with *brink of*. Whenever the VERB is *NONE*, the PREPOSITION is always *on* – both with *verge of* and *brink of* as preferred constructions. This might possibly suggest that, in the absence of a verb in the surrounding syntactic context, the default preposition in either construction is *on*.

VP as PHRASE STRUCTURE exclusively prefers *verge of*, mostly with *neutral* and *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODIES. However, in the *NEWS* REGISTER, while the preferred construction is still *verge of*, *VP* tends to occur with *negative* and *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODIES and the SEMANTIC PROSODIES *CHANGE*, *MOVEMENT*, and *SUCCESS*. In contrast, *NP* tends to prefer *brink of* and

appears in distinctive configurations along with the SEMANTIC PROSODIES *DEATH*, *DEFEAT*, *DESTRUCTION*, *POLITICS*, *PSYCHOLOGY*, and *WARFARE*. However, when the SEMANTIC PROSODY is *SUCCESS* or *SADNESS*, the preferred construction becomes *verge of*, which is also the case when the COLLEXEME is *collapse*. *NP* appears in rules alongside all REGISTERS except *MOVIES*. The preference of *VPs* for *verge of* is also reflected in connection with DIATHESIS:

- *active* and *passive* only prefer *verge of*,
- *NONE* appears in rules with both constructions.

This is because *brink of* is exclusively preferred by *NPs*, which obviously do not have diathetic structures. Only 3 rules involve *passive* voice as DIATHESIS in their LHS, while 79 rules involve *active*, and 57 involve *NONE*.

A particularly interesting observation is that, although the prototypical use of *NP* structures would be the expression of objects, *NP* never occurs in any configurations along with *object* as CROFTIAN MEANING. It only occurs with *action* and *property*, both of which are marked uses of NPs according to Croft (2001). Consider the following examples:

(23) After a year of partisan warfare that brought Virginia to the brink of a state government shutdown, Gov. Terry McAuliffe has started showing Republicans so much love that he has some Democrats worried. (COCA 2015 NEWS WashPost)
(24) One day shaped the most formative years of our lives, hitting us right at the brink of adolescence when our minds were developing and absorbing everything around them. (COCA 2018 MAG Fortune)

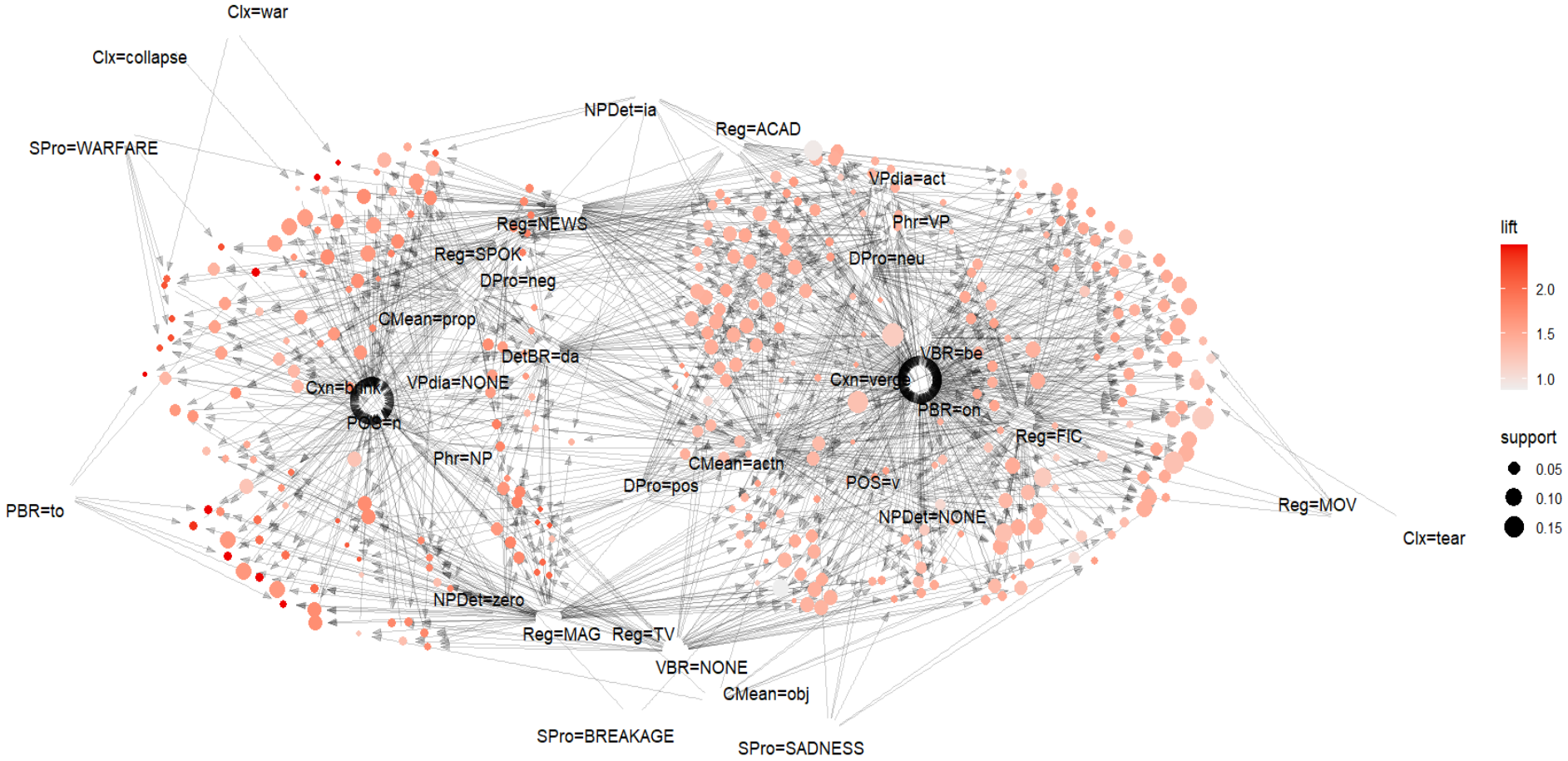
In (23), the deverbal noun *shutdown* (derived from the phrasal verb *shut down*) appears after *of*. A shutdown is clearly a dynamic action that involves not just activity but also a change of state. The example in (24) has *adolescence* as the COLLEXEME after *of.* While a shutdown is an *action*, adolescence is a *property* in terms of CROFTIAN MEANING in the sense that it is a stage of life of a person. This way, it has more in common with a state. While the examples in (23-24) are thus marked in terms of Croft's (2001) conceptual space approach, our findings indicate that *brink of*, even when the COLLEXEME is realized by a nominal form, conventionally is more associated with the CROFTIAN MEANINGS *action* and *property* than *object*. *Verge of* is more prototypical in that, as mentioned above, it is exclusively preferred by *VP* in conjunction with *action* as CROFTIAN MEANING (and more weakly so with *property*, but not with *object*).

This is also reflected in the PART OF SPEECH variable:

- *verb* is exclusively associated with *verge of,* typically with the CROFTIAN MEANING *action* (and less typically, with *property*),
- *verb* tends to appear in REGISTER *NEWS* with *negative* and *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODIES and in the *FICTION*, *SPOKEN*, and *MAGAZINES* REGISTERS with *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODY,
- *noun* is mostly attracted to *brink of*, but, with *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODY, *verge of* is preferred,
- *noun* also prefers *verge of* with COLLEXEME *collapse* or the SEMANTIC PROSODIES *SADNESS* or *SUCCESS.*

As with *VP* as PHRASE STRUCTURE, when PART OF SPEECH *noun* prefers *brink of*, it is primarily along with the CROFTIAN MEANINGS of *action* and *property*.

Figure 4. Visualization of association rules with REGISTERS in LHS



This is also where an important pattern emerges in terms of the basic communicative functions of both constructions: both seem to be used primarily to express dynamic situations and secondarily to express relational states. However, while *verge of* displays more communicative prototypicality with its preferential relationship with *VP*, *verb*, and *action*, *brink of* is less communicatively prototypical with its preferential relationship with *NP*, *noun* and *action*.

Apart from *MOVIES* and *FICTION*, which only prefer *verge of*, all REGISTERS have preferences for either construction. This is illustrated in Figure 4 which, summarizing no less than 355 rules (all the rules with REGISTER features as LHS-elements), is very informationally dense; what the reader should focus on are only the labels containing 'Reg'. As you can see, *FICTION* and *MOVIES* ('Reg=FIC' and 'Reg=MOV') only link to the *verge of* convergence (in this figure the Cxn=verge convergence is the one to the right, and Cxn=brink is the one to the left), while *ACADEMIC* ('Reg=ACAD'), *TV* ('Reg=TV'), *MAGAZINE* ('Reg=MAG'), *SPOKEN* ('Reg=SPOK'), and *NEWS* ('Reg=NEWS') link, to varying degrees, to both convergences. In *FICTION*, the only SEMANTIC PROSODY is *SADNESS*, and the only COLLEXEME is *tear*. In (25), you see a very representative example of this configuration:

(25) Ms. Moriyama herself looked on the verge of tears. (COCA 2016 FIC FantasySciFi)

This indicates that the expression *on the verge of tears*, while it can appear in any REGISTER, is used particularly often in fictional narratives, perhaps as a conventionalized trope for describing characters who are in states of distress and are close to emotional breakdowns. It is not uncommon that certain expressions are conventionalized within fictional writing and similar registers like fictional TV-shows, movies, or theater plays and are encountered there more often than in 'everyday language use' – even in fictional representations of 'everyday language use'.[6] Here are some more observations:

- in the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER, the preferred construction is *brink of* with *negative* SEMANTIC PROSODY,
- in the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER, when *NPs* or *nouns* occur with CROFTIAN MEANING *action*, the preferred construction in *ACADEMIC* is also *brink of*,
- in the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER, with *VPs* or *verbs*, or with PREPOSITION *on*, the preferred construction is *verge of*,
- *NEWS* prefers both constructions, but, with the SEMANTIC PROSODIES of *BREAKAGE* and *WARFARE* and the COLLEXEMES *war* and *collapse*, *brink of* is preferred,
- in *NEWS*, *brink of* is preferred by *negative* and *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODIES, but *verge of* has all three DISCOURSE PROSODIES in this REGISTER,
- in the *SPOKEN* REGISTER, *brink of* is preferred by SEMANTIC PROSODY *WARFARE*, COLLEXEME *war*, and *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY, but, with *positive* and *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODIES, *verge of* is preferred,
- in the *TV* REGISTER, *brink of* is preferred by *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY, but *verge of* is preferred by *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODY.

With *MAGAZINES* as REGISTER, the only SEMANTIC PROSODY that appears in a rule is *SUCCESS*, in which case the preferred construction is *verge of*. Interestingly, in *MAGAZINES*, the preferred construction in the context of *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODY is not *verge of* but *brink* of; both constructions ions are linked to *negative* and *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODIES in this REGISTER though.

[6] For instance, Jensen & Gries (2025) find that *GO (a)round Ving* is particularly strongly associated with registers that feature fictional representations of spoken language but not really associated with the actual spoken register itself.

5. Toward distinctive collo-profiles

Let us try to make sense of the findings presented in the previous section and address the main emergent distinctive patterns.

One important underlying pattern has to do with the basic communicative functions of both constructions. Both constructions appear to primarily express dynamic situations and, secondarily, relational properties as impending future events. This is reflected in the preferential relationship between the CROFTIAN MEANING of *action* and both constructions. However, *verge of* is more attracted to *verbs* and *VPs* whereas *brink of* is preferred by *nouns* and *NPs*. Consequently, while *verge of* is more prototypical in terms of Croft's (2001) overall conceptual space model, *brink of* would be more marked. Now, a protest could be made that the verbal elements that appear in the X-position are *ing*-forms, or present participles, and, according to Croft's (2001) conceptual space approach, participles have the speech act function of modification. However, as seen in examples (2-8, 18-19, 24), the *ing*-forms serve as verbals in clause structures, so their job is clearly not modification but predication. This difference between the two constructions is interesting because it means that, while both constructions primarily express dynamic actions, they do so with different construals. If one accepts Langacker's (1987) distinction between sequential scanning and summary scanning, these two modes of scanning can be used to describe this functional difference. Scanning has to do with the extent to which a situation is construed as a process or as a set of atemporal relations. Sequential scanning construes a situation as a process unfolding over time, while summary scanning construes the situation atemporally as a gestalt. Verbal forms conventionally present sequentially scanned situations, while nominal forms present summarily scanned events. Consequently, what our findings suggest is that *verge of* sequentially scans the impending future event, presenting it as a process, while *brink of* presents it more atemporally via summary scanning.

This has some interesting implications for our understanding of the constructions and whether they are nominal or verbal constructions. Ultimately, they are both somewhere in between, because both do appear with *NPs* and *nouns* on the one hand and *VPs* and *verbs* on the other hand, but *verge of* leans more towards being a verbal construction while *brink of* leans more towards being a nominal construction. This is something that requires more research, to be sure, but it could have consequences for how they should be presented in reference works and grammar books in the future.

This study has also highlighted another contrast between the two constructions which has to do with REGISTER. Overall, they are both associated with most REGISTERS in COCA, and there is no REGISTER that has particularly strong preferences for *brink of* alone (but there are REGISTERS that prefer *brink of* in conjunction with other features). However, *verge of* is strongly preferred by *FICTION* and *MOVIES* – and the expression *on the verge of tears* is particularly strongly associated with *FICTION*. *NEWS* is interesting because, while it shows preferences for both constructions, it prefers *brink of* in the company of *negative* and *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODY as well as the COLLEXEMES *war* and *collapse* along with the SEMANTIC PROSODIES of *WARFARE* and *BREAKAGE*. In other words, in *NEWS*, it seems that *brink of* is preferred when reporting on particularly severe states-of-affairs. This makes sense in the following ways. Firstly, the underlying metaphor of *brink of*, due to the more extreme spatial properties of a brink, lends itself better to the expression of potentially dangerous situations such as international conflicts or global, and local, economy (it should be mentioned that *collapse* and *BREAKAGE* are used very often with *brink of* in reports on economy). Secondly, the same metaphor also has a built-in 'drama' to it which is not incompatible with the sensationalization often seen in news media. *SPOKEN* is similar to *NEWS* in that *brink of* is preferred with *WARFARE* and *war* as well as with *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY, while *verge of* is preferred with the two other DISCOURSE PROSODIES. This seems strange, but I believe it has to do with the type of data categorized as spoken language in COCA – namely, transcriptions of conversations and interviews from television. In particular, news-based talk shows and televised news reports are

included as spoken data. That is, the spoken data in the corpus are very much restricted to the domain of news. Like in the *SPOKEN* REGISTER, *brink of* is particularly strongly associated with *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY in the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER. It is also interesting to note that, returning to our discussion of PHRASE STRUCTURE, PART OF SPEECH, and CROFTIAN MEANING above, the preferential relationship between *NP*, *noun*, and *action* on the one hand and *brink of* on the other is particularly prevalent in the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER. This might owe to the general tendency in academic writing to use nominalizations. One might expect both constructions to mainly be associated with *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODY in *ACADEMIC*, but even here *brink of* mainly has connection with *negative* DISCOURSE PROSODY.

This takes us to the next point – namely, DISCOURSE PROSODY itself. This study shows that, while not as neat as it is made out to be in grammar books and dictionaries, the two constructions are indeed linked to positive and negative connotations, with *brink of* conventionally being associated with negative connotations and *verge of* with positive and neutral connotations. However, this is not clear-cut in a multivariate perspective, as it depends on other features. For example, while *brink of* is preferred by *negative* SEMANTIC PROSODY in most REGISTERS, in *MAGAZINES*, it is the preferred construction by *positive* DISCOURSE PROSODY while *verge of* is preferred by *negative* and *neutral* DISCOURSE PROSODIES. Here, *brink of* is primarily used in articles describing impending successes and victories rather than disasters and wars. *Verge of* is also used in such positive contexts in *MAGAZINES*, but there is a tendency to simply use it much more frequently in connection with impending negative scenarios such as health problems, failures, defeats at sports events, and disrepair and the like.

A final contrast between the two constructions lies in their spatiality, which is reflected in the preferential patterns relating to PREPOSITIONS and VERBS with *verge of* drawing on a more static spatial source domain whereas *brink of* draws on a more dynamic one, where there can be movement towards, from, and on the temporal dividing point metaphorically encoded by *brink*. However, in the absence of a VERB, the default preposition seems to be *on*.

Ultimately, this study does not, it should be pointed out, negate Wiliński (2017). If anything, it supports Wiliński's findings but does provide a more informational and complex profile of the contrasts among the two constructions, in which external features like REGISTER interplay with COLLEXEMES, SEMANTIC PROSODIES, and DISCOURSE PROSODIES. Moreover, co-textual features such as lexemes and grammatical categories seem to figure as distinctive features – sometimes by themselves, but often in distinctive configurations. Importantly then, this study shows that the constructions are probably best viewed as multidimensional phenomena and should be treated as such in contrasting analyses. When it comes to Carter & McCarthy's (2006) characterization of *verge of* as belonging mainly to more formal contexts, however, there is nothing in our findings to support this. In order for this statement to have been supported, *verge of* should be more strongly associated with the *ACADEMIC* REGISTER and not with other REGISTERS – especially, *SPOKEN*, *FICTION*, and *MOVIES* – but that is not the case.

Now, one thing is guaranteed and that is, while this study has uncovered a hitherto unseen level of detailed information pertaining to the differences between the two constructions, it is far from the final word, and in future work, more features can, and should, be included such as, for example, the topical domain of the concordance lines. I suggest this as a future avenue because several such topics recurred in the data set such as SPORTS, FINANCING, INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS, MENTAL HEALTH, and EMOTIONS.

6. Final remarks

It is hoped that this article has illustrated how the two constructions are distinct, differing along multiple dimensions including, but not limited to, the COLLEXEMES that appear after *of*. Applying

association rules analysis in a similar fashion to Jensen & Gries (2025), this article has proposed what could be steps towards distinctive collo-profiles along the lines of what Herbst (2018) advocates. In distinctive collo-profiles, distinctive features and featural configurations emerge from complex interplays between SEMANTIC PROSODY, DISCOURSE PROSODY, COLLEXEMES, various co-textual grammatical and lexical features, and REGISTER. Our main takeaways relating to the constructions themselves are as follows. First, in addition to supporting the general assumption – also confirmed in Wiliński (2017) – that *brink of* is mostly negatively leaning while *verge of* is more neutral, this study also shows that both constructions mainly specify *actions*, in the Croftian (2000) sense, as the impending future events, but categorizing both constructions as verbal constructions or as nominal constructions is incorrect. Rather, *brink of* seems to be more of a nominal construction which construes the impending event atemporally through summary scanning, while *verge of* is a more prototypical verbal construction that construes the impending event as a process via sequential scanning. Second, Wiliński's (2017) monofactorially based confirmation of the general assumption about the connotative functions of the constructions is strengthened by our multifactorial approach in which COLLEXEMES, SEMANTIC PROSODIES, and, importantly, DISCOURSE PROSODIES together indicate the negative leanings of *brink of*. Moreover, the inclusion of contextual features like VERB and PREPOSITION has shown that the underlying metaphorical conceptualizations of TIME as SPACE are reflected in the verbs and prepositions that occur in conjunction with the constructions. What should be interesting to cognitive linguists in particular is that there is a complex interplay between the conceptual semantic functions and pragmatic functions of the constructions and recurrent patterns of use. Third, our study shows that neither construction is a monolith, as either construction displays different behaviors in different registers, which reminds us that constructions can display cross-varietal variability.

Arguably, this study has implications for our understanding of the two constructions, but there are also at least five major implications for construction-grammatical theorizing more broadly.

Firstly, it suggests that, in a usage-based perspective, viewing constructions as multidimensional linguistic phenomena opens up for more detailed accounts. This is because, in accordance with basic principles from usage-based theorizing (e.g. Kemmer & Barlow 2000; Bybee & Hopper 2001), patterns of recurring con- and co-textual features can be part of speakers' constructional knowledge as *bona fide* external constructional properties. This means that constructions that seem either semantically synonymous or which seem meaningless from a semantic perspective may be distinguished on other dimensions (as external properties can be defining constructional features). Similarly, in the case of semantically empty constructions, their functions might be discourse-pragmatic and might be discoverable through other aspects of the constructions than their semantic and symbolic structures.

Secondly, in including register and showing how register seems to play a role as a distinctive dimension (see also Jensen 2025 and Jensen & Gries 2025), this study suggests that constructions may play particular roles in particular varieties. Currently, construction grammarians are waking up to the very likely possibility of constructions not only being cognitive-linguistic phenomena but also sociolinguistic phenomena in the sense that, like other linguistic phenomena, they may display variation across varieties. This article, of course, limits varieties to registers due to the organization of COCA, but – despite this delimitation – we do see that one of the constructions, *verge of*, is particularly strongly associated with registers associated with fiction while the other construction seems more generic in terms of register.

Thirdly, the notion of markedness is also challenged to some extent. While, in the greater scheme of things, the use of nominal structures to express actions is marked, the question is whether the same type of markedness applies at the micro-level of individual constructions. If, as seems to be the case with *brink of*, a conventionalized function is the expression of actions via nominal structures, can we really say that using the construction exactly for that purpose is marked? Perhaps the notion

of markedness needs to be split up into two levels: the large-scale typological level that Croft (2001) addresses and the small-scale constructional level that is addressed in this study. This is clearly something that cannot be settled in this article, but it is definitely something that is worth thinking about.

Fourthly, this study indicates that constructional idiomaticity is somewhat fine-grained. Now, in a construction grammar perspective, this is not really a new discovery. Much early research in construction grammar (e.g. Fillmore et al. 1988) addressed idiomaticity, and it was often found that idiomaticity was a complex interplay between conceptual-semantic and pragmatic factors. In some cases, the same formal expression was even found to display different degrees of idiomaticity in different contexts of use (e.g. Lipka & Schmid 1994). Both this study and Wiliński (2018) show that the two target constructions are both idiomatic and demonstrably functional. This study further shows that there is a complex interplay between conceptual meaning and idiomaticity. Not only are the two constructions metaphor-based idioms (Kövecses & Szabó 1996), they are based on two related but distinct ways of conceptualizing TIME as SPACE. Moreover, these underlying metaphors are reflected in specific conceptualizations linked to patterns of language use, such as the tendency of *brink of* to be associated with category levels that are oriented towards more dynamic scenarios at the semantic level as reflected in the PREPOSITIONS and VERBS appearing in usage-events.

Fifthly, as suggested under the first point above, this study feeds into extant research on constructional synonymy within construction grammar, providing further support for construction grammarians' skepticism towards total synonymy as a linguistic phenomenon. This skepticism is encapsulated by Goldberg's (1995: 67) Principle Of No Synonymy which holds that syntactically distinct constructions are also semantically or pragmatically distinct. This principle can be further traced back to Bolinger's (1968: 127) statement that "a difference in form always spells a difference in meaning" because a "language that permitted syntactic divergences to be systematically redundant would represent a strange kind of economy". The Principle Of No Synonymy has proven to be too simplistic, focusing only on syntax and ignoring social meaning, and Leclerq & Morin (2023: 10) propose a more realistic Principle Of No Equivalence. This principle holds that constructions that differ in form (not just syntax, but also phonology, morphology, orthography or any other formal structure) are bound to be distinct semantically, pragmatically, and/or socially. Traditional distinctive collexeme studies, such as Wiliński (2018), have generated much evidence showing how seemingly synonymous constructions turn out to be semantically distinct. However, multivariate studies such as this one, Olguín-Martinez & Gries (2024) and Jensen & Gries (2025) are able to take into account multiple features that may reveal different types of functional differences among constructions. This also allows for (i) a more detailed and nuanced definition of constructional functionality and, consequently, (ii) more detailed and realistic criticisms of constructional synonymy which are in line with the principle of no equivalence.

As suggested in Jensen & Gries (2025; see also Olguín Martínez & Gries 2024), who, inspired by Herbst (2018), call for distinctive multidimensional collo-profiles in contrastive analyses of constructions, multivariate descriptions are more informative than more traditional monovariate ones. Our study of *verge of* and *brink of* indeed supports this, and the distinctive collo-profiles – while obviously far from exhaustive – that emerge from the findings presented in this article indicate that the two constructions are very complex. Wiliński (2018) finds that the semantic contrasts between the two constructions are very subtle and that these subtleties are reflected in their collostructional patterns. This article confirms this but maps additional subtle, yet fundamental, differences in other variables in addition to the collexemes. While much more research is required, one of this article's take-home messages is that descriptions of the two constructions, such as those found in grammar books and other reference works, if the ambition is to describe the constructions as they are actually used, would have to be updated to provide more detailed information – essentially, to provide collo-profiles.

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English oral proficiency of EFL students at a Danish university

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Abstract: English oral proficiency is increasingly valued in education and the job market, yet it is still underrepresented in second language (L2) instruction and research. This study explores to what extent this paradox applies in a Danish educational context. Drawing on data from three English-related programs at Aalborg University – *English; Language and International Studies, English (LISE)*; and *International Business Communication in English (IBC),* the study investigates students' oral language use patterns (extent, contexts, interlocutors), the significance they attribute to oral proficiency, their perceived oral proficiency, and the relationship between the importance attributed to oral proficiency and the perceived oral proficiency, touching on academic, professional, and personal contexts.

The findings show that most students use English daily at university and beyond for listening and dialogue. However, language choice often depends on whether the interlocutor also speaks Danish. Moreover, students are more comfortable discussing everyday topics than academic and professional ones, and many wish to improve their proficiency in relation to the latter. Comfort levels often vary by interlocutor rather than by topic. Most respondents perceive oral and written proficiency as equally important, which likely reflects their academic background and, correspondingly, their career plans involving written English. Considering different components of oral proficiency, fluency and pronunciation are prioritized over grammar and vocabulary. Most respondents assess their proficiency of oral English as near-native or advanced, especially with respect to pronunciation, while assessing their fluency and vocabulary slightly lower. We found a tendency for a positive relationship between the importance attributed by respondents to certain components of oral proficiency and their own perceived proficiency in these components, especially in regard to grammar. This relationship may reflect that the importance of grammar is less salient than the importance of fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The findings of the study invite further research into for instance the influence of curricula, language anxiety and students' feeling of comfort in relation to topics.

Keywords: Oral proficiency, English as a foreign language at university, pronounciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary

1. Introduction and research questions

English skills have become a necessity in the job market, including the ability to communicate in spoken English (Nomenglobal 2024). Likewise, most second language (L2) students and L2 teachers highlight being able to speak the language as the most salient aspect of communicative competence (Andersen 2009; Fernández 2009; Andersen & Blach 2010) and intuitively as the most important part of mastering a language (Ur 1996). The achievement of oral proficiency and mastery of authentic daily language are competences that are students' highest priorities in primary and secondary school/high school primarily, and they see these specific competences as the most important ones for language use in their everyday lives (e.g., Lund et al. 2023: 180-200). They find written language competences less important than oral proficiency, and to some degree they find exercises in written language less engaging and demotivating, perceiving written activities as ones that do not support their own learning goals (Lund et al. 2023: 178, 180, 198).

Despite its widely acknowledged importance, oral proficiency occupies what Fernández & Andersen (2019) describe as a "paradoxical position" in foreign language education. While both teachers and students consistently emphasize the value of speaking skills, instruction in this area remains notably underdeveloped. In many classrooms, writing tends to be prioritized, while (teaching) speaking receives limited, often incidental attention. At best, educators aim to create

opportunities for students to talk. However, systematic and explicit instruction in oral communication – whether dialogic or monologic – is rare. This is due, in part, to the implicit assumption that orality will develop naturally without targeted pedagogical intervention (e.g., Brown & Yule 1983; Bygate 1998; Roldán Tapia & Gómez Parra 2006; Sim & Pop 2016). It is moreover remarkable that oral language likewise has received less research attention than written language in foreign language learning: "Compared with studies on English writing and reading, studies on ES [English speaking] education are relatively very small in scale" (Wang et al. 2022: 2). In recent years, some studies, however, have begun exploring the role of English oral proficiency in Danish educational contexts and how it can be taught (e.g., Andersen et al. 2015; Eskildsen & Cadierno 2020; Krogager Andersen 2020; Holmen 2023). There is, however, still a knowledge gap when it comes to teaching and learning English oral proficiency at universities.

In the context of the global job market, the importance of English oral proficiency is increasingly recognized. Numerous studies highlight that strong spoken English skills are not only valued by employers but are often considered essential for career advancement in a wide range of industries (e.g., Cambridge English 2016; Lønsmann 2024). According to a 2023 OECD study, English, including spoken English, is one of the most in-demand skills in the European labour market. In Denmark, approximately 60% of international companies use English as their predominant corporate language (Lønsmann et al. 2024: 20), and many employees state that they use English on a daily basis (Lønsmann et al. 2024: 55-56). As English continues to serve as the lingua franca in business, science and technology (e.g., Lønsmann et al. 2024: 34-36, 112-113), the ability to communicate effectively in spoken English provides students with a competitive advantage and access to many employment opportunities.

In order to better understand the complex issues concerning oral proficiency in EFL, our study investigates how students of three Danish university programmes with English perceive English oral proficiency. The programmes are *English; Language and International Studies, English* (LISE); and *International Business Communication in English* (IBC). Our study is exploratory, aiming to map the perspectives of the students. More precisely, our aim is to explore how the students experience oral proficiency at university and in other life areas, such as the workplace and private life, and the significance they personally attribute to spoken English.
Thus, our research questions are:

1. *What characterizes university EFL students' English language use patterns (extent, topics, contexts, interlocutors)?*
2. *What significance do university EFL students attribute to oral proficiency in English?*
3. *How do university EFL students perceive their own oral proficiency in English?*
4. *What is the relationship between the significance university EFL students attribute to oral proficiency and their perceived oral proficiency?*

2. Conceptual and empirical background

In this section, we present the conceptual and empirical background of our study. First, we discuss the role of English in Danmark. Secondly, we discuss the complex concept of L2 oral proficiency. Thirdly, we discuss the concept of Willingness to Communicate, and finally, we consider English oral proficiency at Danish universities.

2.1. Danes' relationship with English: language use, opinions, and self-assessment

As early as 1973, Sørensen (1973: 15) claims that English has had an immense influence on the Danish language and in Danish society since WWII, with influential power related to both language and culture in many forms and areas; he mentions politics, business, sports, and technical fields among other areas, pointing to the influence of English in television, radio, newspapers, and

magazines. It is safe to say that the influence of English since then has grown exponentially with the advent of the internet and social media. Young people use (and learn) English in many other ways than being taught in school, e.g., through cultural products like television/streaming series and films and through gaming and social media. In such contexts, people use other registers of oral English than the ones that are taught in schools and universities, e.g., other levels of formality and types of vocabulary, and often mixed with Danish expressions (Lønsmann et al. 2024: 23).

These language use patterns indicate that English is no longer exclusively taught, learned, and used as a foreign language primarily for school-related contexts, but also functions as an everyday language (Lønsmann et al. 2024: 15-16). In some Danish contexts, English may serve as a means for communication, even if all interlocutors are speakers of Danish (Thøgersen & Preisler 2023: 10). Thøgersen & Preisler (2023: 10), therefore, argue that English is an indispensable second language in Denmark, indicating that it is not possible to fully function in the Danish society without a certain (at least) receptive competence in English. Thøgersen (2007) showed that Danes to a large degree have a "laissez faire-attitude" towards English, whereas Kristiansen (2006) found Danes to be English-critical, and Kristiansen & Vikør (2006) stated that Danes are English-positive.

Recently, Bianchetti (2020) contributed to the debate, discussing issues of possible "domain loss" of Danish in higher education, research, and business due to the dominance of Global English. Specifically, she posed the question whether Denmark could be considered a bilingual society. In a net-based survey involving 30 participants, Bianchetti examined the role of English in everyday life focusing on the use of English in several social practices. She concludes that although English is extensively used across various spheres of life, and the participants considered English an important language to master, the status of Danish as first language was perceived as unthreatened. At the same time, participants did not regard Denmark as a bilingual country (yet), which, however, may be due small sample size. The same tendencies regarding the role of English can be found in other Scandinavian countries, see, e.g., Bardel et al. (2023) for an overview of recent research on foreign language conducted in Sweden.

Two surveys on Danes' self-assessed English competences conducted in 1995-96 (Preisler 1999) and 2022 (Thøgersen & Preisler 2023) asked similar questions about skills, contact with English, and attitudes toward the language. Competences were measured through tasks of varying difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, rated on a 4-point scale. Contact was assessed by frequency and context (e.g., media, apps, social interaction), while attitudes included expectations for Danes' English skills and views on English as a cultural threat or enrichment. Results show that younger, educated, and employed people consistently report higher skills, more contact, and more positive attitudes. In 2022, all age groups scored higher than in 1995-96, and gaps between young and old respondents narrowed. Respondents under 25 averaged near level 4, while those over 66 improved from below level 2 to between levels 2 and 3. Competence differences between simple and difficult tasks were minimal, and contact with English increased markedly from 1995-96 to 2022, particularly among younger people. Listening and reading occur almost daily; speaking and writing nearly weekly. Older respondents report less frequent contact, especially in production. Interestingly, listening declined slightly, possibly due to English being perceived as ubiquitous in 2022, which makes listening to English less noticeable. Expectations for others' English skills remain high across age groups, with slight increases since 1995-96. To sum up, the 2022 study's overall conclusion is that especially young people have more skills in English, more contact with English and see English as a natural part of their lives (Thøgersen & Preisler 2023).

2.2. L2 oral proficiency: components and levels

Second language oral proficiency is a complex phenomenon with several components (De Jong et al. 2012). This componential view is reflected in two of the most commonly used frameworks for

the assessment of language skills. These frameworks are the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR 2020) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL 2024). These scales are in many ways comparable as both use level division and performance descriptors to indicate a person's "can do"-skills (Goethe Institut USA 2025). For this paper, we focus on CEFR, owing to the European context of the study.

CEFR (2020) divides language competences into reception, production, interaction, and mediation, indicating that these different activity types include specific sets of activities ("the what") and require different skills and competencies ("the how") and both oral and written dimensions (in some cases intertwined). The scale divides competences into six levels; basic user (A1, A2), independent user (B1, B2), and proficient user (C1, C2). Furthermore, communicative language competences are divided into linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. Linguistic competence consists of general linguistic range, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control, phonological control, and orthographic control (CEFR 2020: 130-136). Sociolinguistic competence is described as sociolinguistic appropriateness, including, e.g., linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, register differences, and dialect (CEFR 2020: 136-137). Pragmatic competence concerns flexibility, turn-taking, thematic development, coherence and cohesion, propositional precision, and fluency (CEFR 2020: 137-142).

Adopting such a componential view, we apply Saito's (2017) conceptualization of L2 oral proficiency as composed of numerous linguistic skills spanning pronunciation (e.g., segmentals, prosody), fluency (e.g., breakdown, speed, hesitation), vocabulary (e.g., appropriateness, richness), and grammar (e.g., accuracy, complexity).

2.3. Willingness to Communicate

Unlike written production, oral production is characterized by immediacy, which poses special challenges for L2 speakers, who need to juggle lexical, grammatical, and pronunciation choices at a fast pace without recourse to dictionaries or other reference materials. The immediacy of oral production may impede willingness to communicate orally in the L2. The concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was introduced by McCrosky & Baer (1985) in the context of first language communication and expanded to second language acquisition and communication by MacIntyre et al. (1998). The concept refers to an individual's ability and readiness to initiate communication in a given situation. According to the pyramid model by MacIntyre et al. (1998), several factors influence the WTC of a foreign language student, e.g., personality, motivation, perceived communicative competence, and social factors. This means that a combination of stable individual traits and situational variables determines a learner's willingness to speak in a foreign language. The theoretical framework of WTC provides a lens enabling us to interpret students' self-reported willingness to engage in English communication across different academic and social contexts.

While WTC has been extensively studied in the context of Asian EFL students (e.g., Peng (2012) on WTC in Chinese classrooms and Yashima (2002) on Japanese students), relatively little WTC research has focused on EFL university students in Scandinavia. Enhancing L2 confidence and WTC is often seen as an important goal for L2 teaching (MacIntyre et al. 1998), and developing WTC is a central task when it comes to strengthening students' oral communication competences, and WTC can be seen as an important predictor of communicative success. Studies have emphasized the importance of classroom climate, teacher support, and peer interaction (Yashima 2002; Peng 2012). Authentic use of the foreign language is another essential part of strengthening L2 confidence and WTC, and teachers encourage learners to use L2 inside and outside the classroom (Reinders 2016). Moreover, students consider interaction in language acquisition a key factor (Muho & Kurani 2014), and students with high WTC and L2 confidence improve their language proficiency, e.g., in terms of fluency (Derwing et al. 2008). This relates well to research (Sundqvist & Uztosun 2023) showing that extramural English activities such as listening to music,

watching TV, and reading, predicts perceived English oral proficiency among European and Asian upper secondary school students. See, e.g., Ducker (2021) for further literature on WTC.

2.4. English oral proficiency at Danish universities

Studies of teaching and learning English oral proficiency at universities specifically in a Danish or Nordic context are scarce, especially studies investigating students' perspectives. A number of studies from other countries focusing on various dimensions of oral proficiency can be found: e.g., Chen & Goh (2011), highlighting challenges of Chinese teachers, Betonio (2017), studying assessment of different student groups at a Philippine university, Cabezas & Beltran (2021), complementing the communicative approach to language teaching with a more grammar-based approach in Chile, Suliman & Salama (2023), highlighting effective techniques for improving oral skills among Sudanese students, and Phukan et al. (2022), focusing on English oral production among non-language students in Ukraine.

In a Danish context, The Danish National Centre for Foreign Languages (NCFF) conducted a study consisting of 59 group interviews with 160 language students (of whom 42 were EFL students) from five Danish universities on students' motivation for studying, their experience of studying, and their future work plans after graduation (Lund et al. 2025: 18). A remarkable finding is that EFL students experience both receptive and productive language competence as much less challenging than students of other foreign languages. EFL students seem to see their English competence as an "unmarked, almost natural" language competence that they "just have" and can use without problems (Lund et al. 2025: 61). It seems less important for them to learn more English, as they see their own language competences as sufficient. EFL students view academic content, not the English language, as a challenge.

English is spoken in class from the beginning (as opposed to the classes in German, French and Spanish studies, where Danish to a large degree is used by teachers and students in class). For EFL students, language training thus takes place in class through lectures and dialogue in English, which improves their oral (and written) proficiency. Students do not express a wish for explicit teaching of English language, and they experience being able to use English at the level required in class. According to the respondents in Lund et al.'s (2025: 62) study, focus in class is less on language, e.g., language correction, and more on academic content. This seems to indicate that grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary play a less dominant role than academic content in EFL study programmes, and to the extent that they do play a role, it is in the form of feedback on written assignments and academic writing, whereas students perceive their oral English as already good (enough) (Lund et al. 2025: 63).

Some students report experiencing improvement in their oral language competences because teaching in class is carried out in English and is almost exclusively dialogue-based (Lund et al. 2025: 64). They also strengthen their written language competences by receiving feedback from the instructor, and specifically, aspects like academic writing and phonetics are mentioned as basic skills a student must learn as a foundation for further studies (Lund et al. 2025: 62-63). Furthermore, they do not find studying abroad for a semester necessary to strengthen their language proficiency or their cultural understanding (as opposed to students of German, French, and Spanish) (Lund et al. 2025: 63).

The formal English level of EFL students at university is determined by the admission requirements of the study programme. English A-level (advanced level)[1] from Danish upper secondary school is a prerequisite for enrolment in an EFL university degree programme, and according to the Danish Ministry of Education and Research (UFM 2025a), students who have completed Danish upper secondary education with English as an A-level subject, are at CEFR level

[1] *A-level* is the official translation of Danish *A-niveau*, which is the advanced (highest possible) level for a subject. The lowest possible level is C-level, which is the basic level, and the intermediate level is termed *B-level* (UFM 2025b).

C1. This means that students enrolling in an EFL programme at university are defined as being at level C1.

A study on students' and teachers' self-assessment of English language proficiency in English-medium university education conducted at Copenhagen Business School (Jensen et al. 2011) reports that the majority of students (and certainly those from Denmark) enrolled in English-medium university degree programmes in Denmark rank their own English proficiency quite highly (in terms of global English skills as well as academic English skills). While respondents (N= 1794) hailed from various countries (Sweden, Germany, Norway, Iceland, Italy, France, China, among others), Danish students accounted for over 60% (Jensen et al. 2011). Danish students ranked their overall proficiency at 4.76 (on a 6-point scale with the overall average across all respondents being 4.73 for overall proficiency).

3. Methods

In term of methodology, we conducted a survey among students of three Danish university EFL programmes at Aalborg University: *Bachelor and Master in English* (see English Bachelor's Curriculum 2022; English Master's Curriculum 2022); *Bachelor in Language and International Studies, English* (LISE) (see LISE Bachelor's Curriculum 2022); and *Bachelor and Master in International Business Communication in English* (IBC) (see IBC Master's Curriculum 2023; IBC Bachelor's Curriculum 2024). In these programmes (all three), students specialize in English language, in combination with other subjects like international studies (LISE), literature and culture (English), or business communication (IBC). All students from all three programmes received an invitation to participate in the survey.

The survey was designed from a quantitative perspective and with qualitative data elicitation included only as a supplement. Hence, all multiple choice or scale questions in the survey were obligatory, while **qualitative responses were optional and were only included where** we **wished to gain further insight into some of the quantitative questions.**

The survey's first four questions concerned respondents' background (specific degree programme, native language, etc.). The next group of two questions concerned the students' daily use of oral English for various types of activities at university and outside university. Activities beyond university were included in line with Sundqvist & Uztosun's (2023: 1659) argument that extramural English activities are "a variable that cannot be overlooked in research". In the next two questions, the respondents were asked about their assessment of the importance of oral proficiency in general, and they were asked to rank four components of oral proficiency (following Saito 2017) according to their importance. The next six questions concerned the role of oral proficiency in their current and previous education, the results of which will not be addressed in this paper. Further, the respondents were asked, through eight questions, to assess their own oral proficiency, cf. CEFR. They were given four options: *beginner* (corresponding to A1 or A2 on the CEFR scale), *intermediate* (corresponding to B1), *advanced* (corresponding to B2), and *near-native* (corresponding to C1). We excluded *native* (corresponding to C2), because our respondents all learn English as a foreign language, and included *beginner* for completeness, despite its irrelevance for our respondents. Since any formal testing of the respondents' language proficiency was beyond the scope of this study, we opted for self-assessed proficiency. We thus follow Jensen et al. (2011: 42), who highlight that "[s]tudents' self-assessment of language proficiency has in a number of studies been shown to correlate positively with more objective measures". Jensen et al. (2011) cite Blanche (1988: 81), who finds correlation coefficients in the range 0.50-0.60 or higher, as well as Alderson (2005), who finds that cultural and linguistic background can impact the correlation between self-assessment and objective measures.

Our respondents were also asked to provide information about the types of topics they feel most comfortable talking about in English and those they would like to feel more comfortable talking about in English. Finally, they were asked who they regularly speak English to, who they feel most comfortable speaking to in English, and who they would like to feel more comfortable speaking to in English. These last elements of the survey are related to the respondents' WTC. For most questions, additional space for elaborating or explaining their answers in writing was provided.

Before the survey was distributed, a small informal pilot study was carried out, involving four pilot respondents from other study programmes (Software, Computer Science, Biotechnology, and German) at different levels of study (2nd, 6th, and 8th semester). The aim was to test the survey questions for comprehensibility and for a sufficient degree of comprehensiveness in relation to the intended themes. Based on the feedback from the pilot study, the questions were subsequently revised and adapted.

The survey among all students in the three programmes ran from May 27 to June 11, 2025. It was conducted in English and was distributed to students through the AAU learning platform *Moodle* and *Facebook* groups administered by the student counsellors of the relevant degree programmes. 83 students responded to our survey, but only 51 students completed it. Four of these had a native language different from Danish and were removed to ensure a more homogenous group. The results below are therefore based on 47 responses. Of these, 22 are students of English, 13 are students of LISE, and 12 are students of IBC. The 47 responses represent 31 BA students and 16 MA students.

We used the open-source software R (version 4.4.2) (R core team 2024) and RStudio (Posit team 2024) for data visualisation. In addition, we used the following packages: tidyverse (Wickham et al. 2019), ggplot2 (Wickham 2016), dplyr (Wickham et al. 2023a), tidyr (Wickham et al. 2024), Hmisc (Harrell 2025), and Scales (Wickham et al. 2023b).

4. Results

In this section, we report our findings, based on the quantitative data from our survey and with **selected qualitative responses included to elucidate quantitative patterns, where relevant.** The first group of questions in our survey were four background questions related to degree programme, semester, native language, and whether the respondents have lived in an English-speaking country. The purpose of these questions was to enable subdivision of the students into groups according to their programme and semester, which, however, is not used for this paper, and for screening out respondents with a native language other than Danish, as described in section 3.

4.1. Language use

After the background questions, a series of questions on various aspects of respondents' language use followed.

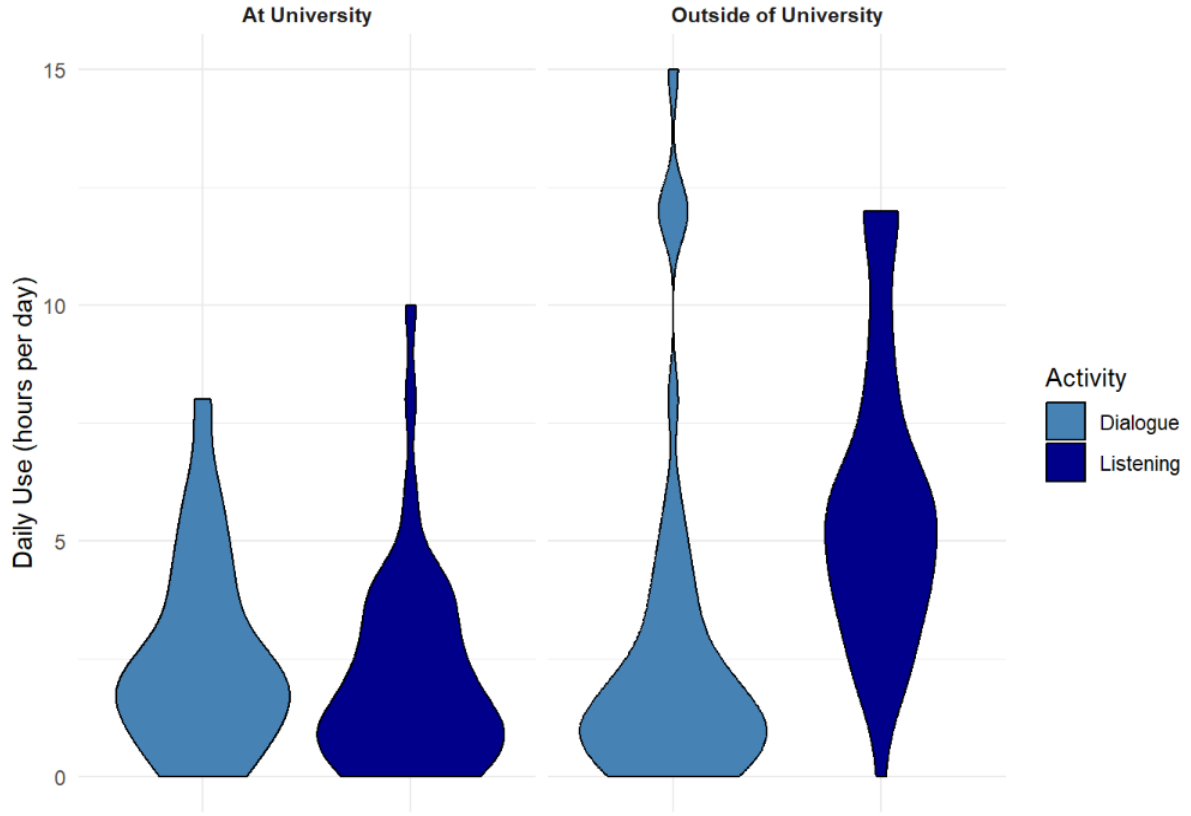
4.1.1. Daily use, activities, and contexts

The first group of two questions were related to the student's daily use of oral English at university and outside university, providing information about the amount of time used daily for different types of oral communication (dialogue and listening to different media), and the use at university in different contexts (specifically talking to a lecturer in class and outside of class, in supervision, and in group work).

Our respondents report using English daily at university for both dialogue (mean: 2.53 hours per day, standard deviation (SD): 2.03 hours per day) and listening (mean: 2.13 hours per day, SD: 2.12 hours per day) for roughly the same amount of time, whereas outside of university they report

spending considerably longer listening (mean: 5.76 hours per day, SD: 3.03 hours per day) than engaging in dialogue (mean: 2.77 hours per day, SD: 3.55 hours per day). Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of responses along the y-axis (hours per day) in a violin plot: the width of the violins at each y-axis value illustrates the number of respondents who report spending that number of hours per day. As illustrated in the figure, the variation is larger (the violins are taller and less curvy) for activities outside of university compared to activities at university, which is also reflected in the larger standard deviations for activities outside of university. This tendency is particularly pronounced for dialogue.

Figure 1. Daily use of English by location and activity



Almost all our respondents (95.7%) report that English is the primary language of communication when talking to a lecturer in class, while only 34% report that English is the primary language when talking to a lecturer outside of class. Whereas 72.3% report that English is the primary language in supervision, only 48.9% report that English is the primary language in group work. See Table 1 for an overview.

Table 1. English as the primary language of communication by context

Context	**Count**	**Percentage**
Group work	23	48.9
Talking to lecturer outside of class	16	34.0
Talking to lecturer in class	45	95.7
Supervision	34	72.3

Respondents give a range of reasonings behind their choice of either English or Danish in the different contexts (quotes are taken directly from students' responses and thus include typos and other idiosyncrasies):

(1) I wish it felt more natural to speak English with fellow students, but since we're both Danish speakers it feels forced and awkward.
(2) When a class is in English I like to keep in class communication in English too. But when conversing with other Danes we often default to speaking Danish.
(3) it's easier to use English when speaking about the study material rather than translating it to danish in my head.
(4) When discussing content from the major courses, English is naturally the language spoken. However, whenever we need some practical information, I can see that most students often ask the teachers for a quick chat in Danish. So, I think most of the interesting discussions about the subjects are conducted in English while practical issues to do with the program structure are held in Danish. At least, that's my impression.
(5) Most of my professors are not native danish speakers, so dialogue with them is in english.
(6) Because many of my professors are from outside of Denmark and do not speak Danish.
(7) Some lecturers primary language is english, though i do believe it is also to train our english more. it switches up, sometimes danish, sometimes english. i don't really mind which one it is. In group work i would say primarily danish unless if someone doesn't speak it then we accommodate to that.

Some respondents argue that they prefer to speak Danish with their fellow students if they are also Danish, as in (1) and (2). However, some respondents point out that they prefer conversing about academic topics in English, see (3) and (4). Finally, some respondents highlight that they have to use English as their lecturers or fellow students do not speak Danish, as in (5), (6) and (7). Overall, the respondents seem very positive towards using English in different activities related to their studies, one respondent even stating: "The only reason I don't speak English more is because I live in Denmark – in all honesty English is my preferred language".

4.1.2. Topics

Being given a wide range of options to choose from (allowing them to select a maximum of five), the respondents were also asked to provide information about which topics they felt most comfortable talking about in English and which topics they would like to feel more comfortable talking about in English. **We chose to limit the maximum number of topics in order to reduce the risk of respondents clicking "yes" to all options without reflection. This restriction forced respondents to make up their minds, while still making room for individual differences.**

More than 70% of our respondents report being comfortable talking about everyday practical topics (78.8%), lifestyle (72.3%), personal experiences & well-being (87.2%), and popular culture (83%), and less than 10% report wishing to be more comfortable talking about these topics. For business and academic topics, however, the proportion of respondents reporting that they wish to be more comfortable talking about these topics is larger (business: 46.8%, academic: 66%) than the proportion reporting that they are already comfortable talking about these topics (business: 8.5%, academic: 44.7%). For politics & current affairs, the proportion of respondents reporting that they wish to be more comfortable talking about this topic (23%) and the proportion reporting that they are already comfortable talking about this topic (26%) are almost of equal size. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of responses in a bar plot.

Figure 2. Topics that respondents feel comfortable talking about in English and wish to feel more comfortable talking about in English

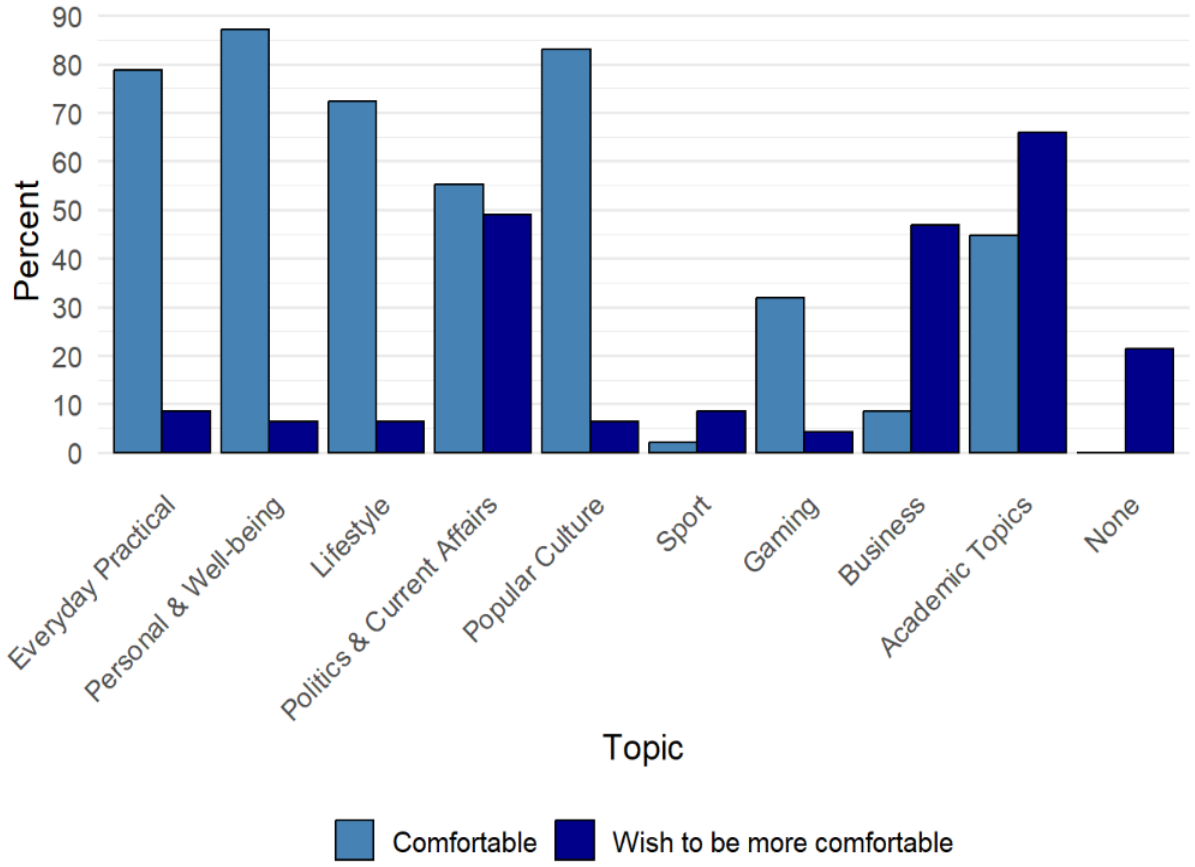
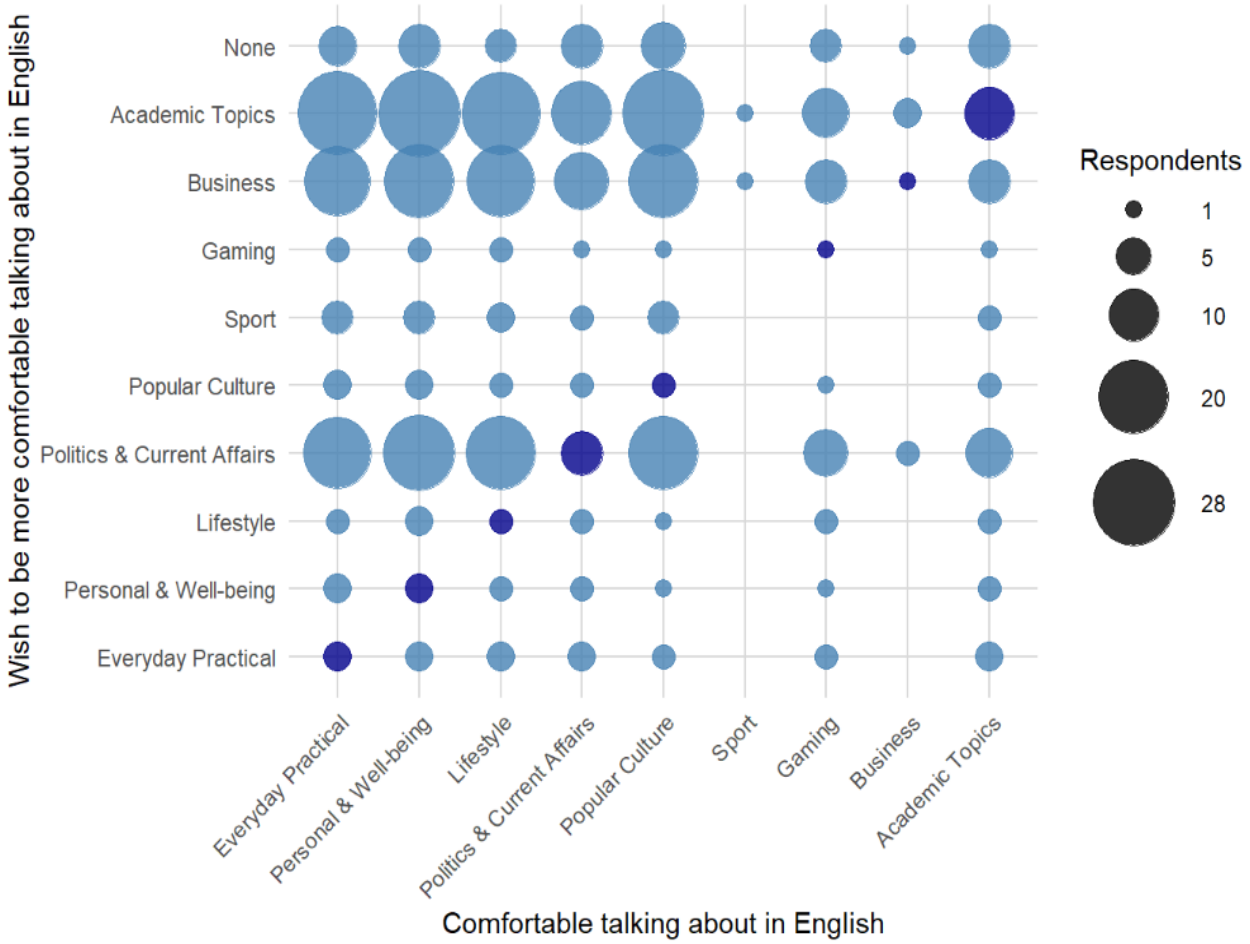


Figure 3 below illustrates the relationship between which topics respondents already feel comfortable discussing in English (x-axis) and topics they wish to feel more comfortable discussing in English (y-axis), revealing areas of strong confidence versus areas where respondents would like more practice. Larger dots indicate more respondents. Across a range of already comfortable topics, respondents report a wish to be more comfortable discussing academic topics, business, and politics & current affairs, all topics central to at least one of the three study programmes. The diagonal highlights topics that respondents are already comfortable discussing in English and wish to be even more comfortable discussing in that language. Dots on the diagonal are generally small (few respondents report wishing to be more comfortable discussing topics they are already comfortable discussing) with the exception of academic topics and to some extent politics & current affairs.

Figure 3. Relationship between topics respondents feel comfortable discussing in English (x-axis) and topics they wish to feel more comfortable discussing in English (y-axis)



Some respondents added here that the topics they are not comfortable speaking about in English are also topics they would not be comfortable speaking about in Danish with one respondent stating: "I'm at the level of proficiency where the topics I feel uncomfortable talking about in English are the same as the ones I feel uncomfortable taking about in Danish". Though this comment indicates a perception of similar proficiency level in Danish and English, it also indicates that some respondents may have interpreted the phrase "being comfortable speaking about" as relating to not wanting to or being uncomfortable speaking about certain personal topics or lack of knowledge and interest in certain other topics, e.g., gaming, business, and politics. Indeed, another respondent adds that their selection of areas which they would like to be more comfortable speaking about is "due to my personal experience and knowledge within the fields, which are lacking a bit. I might hesitate on these topics due to a lack of knowledge". However, another respondent added: "I'm more confident speaking in my native languages and therefore I feel that I'm anonymous when speaking in English. A lot of my personality gets lost when I speak in English". This comment is perhaps less about specific topics and more about other aspects of spoken language such as being able to make jokes and puns and being able to keep up with conversations in casual settings that may be fast paced, even if mundane. The issue here is perhaps less about a lack of vocabulary in speaking about certain academic topics and more about issues in fluency.

4.1.3. Interlocutors

The respondents were asked who they regularly speak English to, who they feel most comfortable speaking to in English, and who they would like to feel more comfortable speaking to in English. Again, the respondents were provided with a wide range of possible answers.

Most of our respondents report speaking English regularly to fellow students (85.1%), friends (76.6%) and teachers (87.2%), while only few respondents report speaking English regularly to other familiar groups (family: 10.6%, colleagues 10.6%, employers 8.5%, clients/customers 12.8%), with new acquaintances taking up an in-between position at 25.5%. Respondents who speak English to friends regularly are generally comfortable doing so (70.2%), and few wish to be more comfortable doing so (12.8%). In comparison, the proportion of respondents speaking English regularly to fellow students and teachers who are comfortable doing so is considerably smaller (fellow students: 46.8%, teachers: 29.8%), and the proportion wishing to be more comfortable doing so is larger (fellow students: 29.8%, teachers: 40.4%). Regarding speaking English to teachers, the proportion of respondents wishing to be more comfortable is larger than the proportion already feeling comfortable. Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of responses in a bar plot.

Figure 4. Interlocutors that respondents speak English to regularly, feel comfortable speaking English to, and wish to feel more comfortable speaking English to.

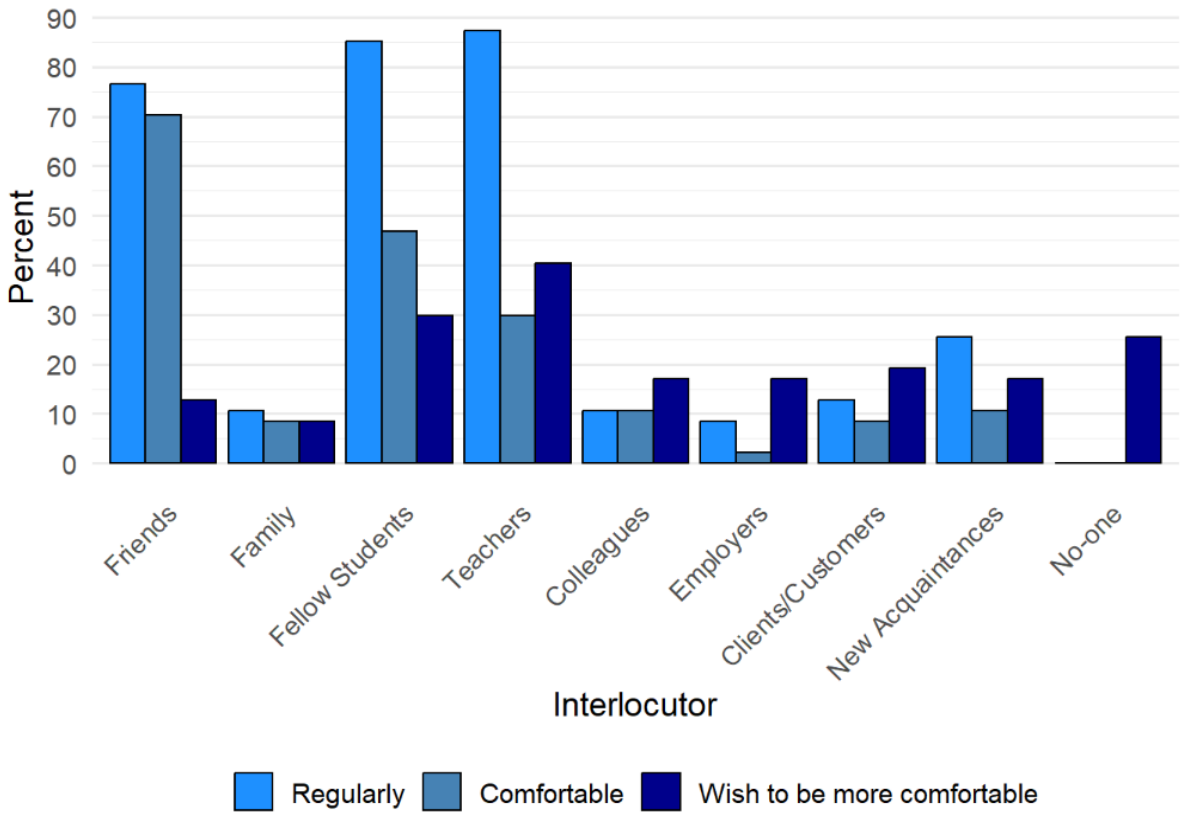
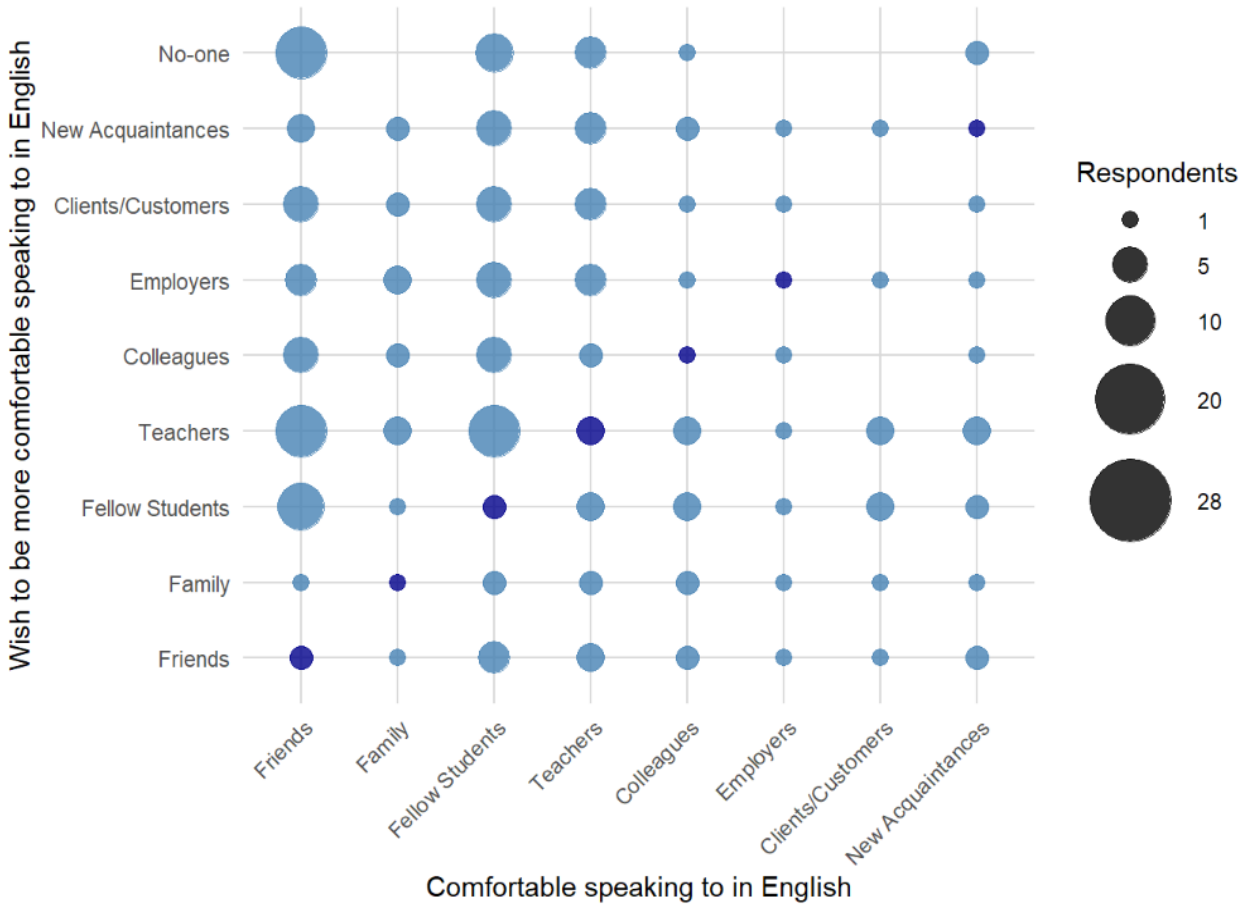


Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between which types of interlocutors respondents already feel comfortable talking to in English (x-axis) and which types they wish to feel more comfortable talking to in English (y-axis), revealing relationships of strong confidence versus relationships where respondents would like more practice. Larger dots indicate more respondents. Figure 5 shows a flatter distribution than we saw in Figure 3 (dot sizes are more uniform), indicating that patterns

for interlocutors are less general than for topics. Two slight tendencies can be observed, however: across a range of wishes, many respondents feel comfortable talking to friends and fellow students in English. The diagonal highlights interlocutors that respondents are already comfortable talking to in English and wish to be even more comfortable talking to in English. Dots on the diagonal are generally small (few respondents report wishing to be more comfortable talking to interlocutors they are already comfortable talking to).

Figure 5. Relationship between interlocutors that respondents feel comfortable speaking to in English (x-axis) and interlocutors they wish to feel more comfortable speaking to in English (y-axis)



Respondents were mainly concerned with English proficiency in these questions – either their own or that of the interlocutor.

(8) When speaking to people who I feel are better at English, I get a bit insecure.
(9) I don't feel very comfortable speaking english in general, because I don't feel good enough, especially in uni even though I major in it.
(10) The only time I feel uncomfortable speaking English is when the other person is bad at English.
(11) Sometimes I just find it a little awkward speaking English to people who also know my native language, but I don't feel that way with friends or fellow students my age.

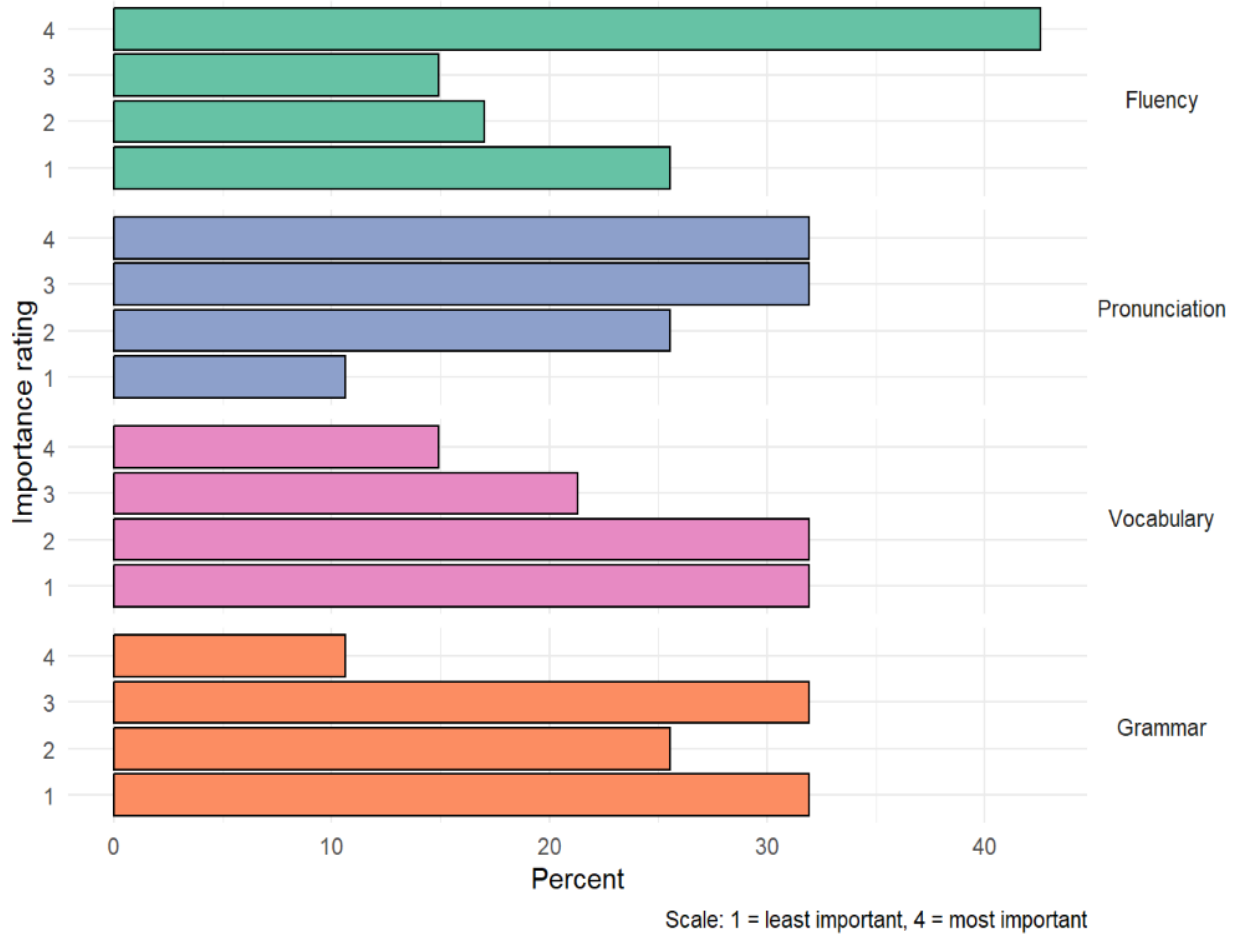
Some respondents mentioned feelings of insecurity, see (8) and (9). However, another respondent

had a different view, see (10). Finally, a few respondents mentioned speaking English with people who also know Danish, as is often the case at university. One respondent added feeling awkward in these situations, see (11).

4.2. Importance ratings and self-assessed proficiency

The respondents were asked to rank four components of oral proficiency according to their importance. Following Saito (2017), our survey thus distinguished between four components of oral proficiency (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar), and respondents were asked to rank them relative to each other, leading to a 4-point scale from 1 (least important) to 4 (most important). The fluency component was rephrased as "speak without hesitation or long pauses" in the survey to make it semantically transparent for the respondents. Our respondents generally assign higher importance ratings to pronunciation (mean: 2.85 points, SD = 1.00 point) and fluency (mean: 2.75 points, SD: 1.26 points), and lower importance ratings to grammar (mean: 2.21 points, SD: 1.02 points) and vocabulary (mean: 2.19 points, SD:1.06 points). Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of responses in a bar plot. Longer bars toward the top indicate greater perceived importance, and longer bars at the bottom indicate lower perceived importance.

Figure 6. Relative importance of oral proficiency components



Respondents' comments show that students perceive components of oral communication in different ways and associate them with different purposes:

(12) Without substantial vocabulary the speaker is not able to express their point or ideas fluently and it might lead to confusion, restricted conversation or avoiding communication alltogether. Being able to speak without hesitation or long pauses builds confidence and allows for fluent communication. The pronounciation is important to be able to make the point clearly so that the other party can understand. In oral presentation grammar is the least important because the other points make up for any grammatical mistakes.

(13) Long pauses cause misunderstanding and so does mispronunciation. A use of a large vocabulary increase understanding and the use of grammar is more important in writing.

(14) Unless you're in some kind of professional/public speaking setting, hesitation does nothing to hinder someone's understanding of you. To an reasonable extent, the same is true for grammar (with exceptions). A lacking vocabulary or bad pronunciation, on the other hand, would make understanding more difficult unequivocally.

(15) Fluent speech, to me, is the most important. If there is too much hesitation or searching for the right word, you can lose faith in your own capabilities. The vocabulary is an undeniable help when speaking English in an academic setting. If the pronunciation is good, you're more likely to be taken seriously, however, I don't necessarily think that sounding like a native speaker is of the utmost importance. And lastly, Grammatical mistakes will happen when you're speaking, there is no way around it. While I will obviously strive to pay attention to all of the elements listed above, the grammatical mishaps are possibly the easiest to 'mask' when having a conversation.

While the comments above either focus on the speaker, as in (12) and (15), or the listener, as in (13) and (14), they all seem to place grammatical competence towards the lower end. The respondent in (13) even states that grammar is more important in the context of written communication. High fluency and a large vocabulary are linked to aspects of speaker self-confidence ((12) and (15)) and good pronunciation is linked to being taken more seriously (in (15)).

Moreover, the respondents were asked to assess their own oral proficiency, both overall and with respect to the four components (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) on a 4-point scale from 1 to 4 (1 "beginner", 2 "intermediate", 3 "advanced" and 4 "near-native") and compared to their own written proficiency ("stronger", "equally strong", or "weaker").

Self-assessed proficiency generally clusters at near-native and advanced levels. Overall self-assessed proficiency (mean: 3.43 points, SD: 0.54 points) mirrors self-assessed proficiency in pronunciation (mean: 3.49 points, SD: 0.62 points), grammar (mean: 3.43 points, SD: 0.58 points), and fluency (mean: 3.43 points, SD: 0.70 points), while self-assessed vocabulary proficiency (mean: 3.13 points, SD: 0.74 points) is generally lower than the other components. Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of responses in a bar plot. Longer bars toward the top indicate stronger self-assessed proficiency, and longer bars towards the bottom indicate lower self-assessed proficiency. The number of respondents reporting intermediate level is smaller for self-assessed overall proficiency than for the various components. Self-assessed pronunciation shows the highest number of respondents reporting near-native level.

Figure 7. Self-assessed oral proficiency overall and divided by component

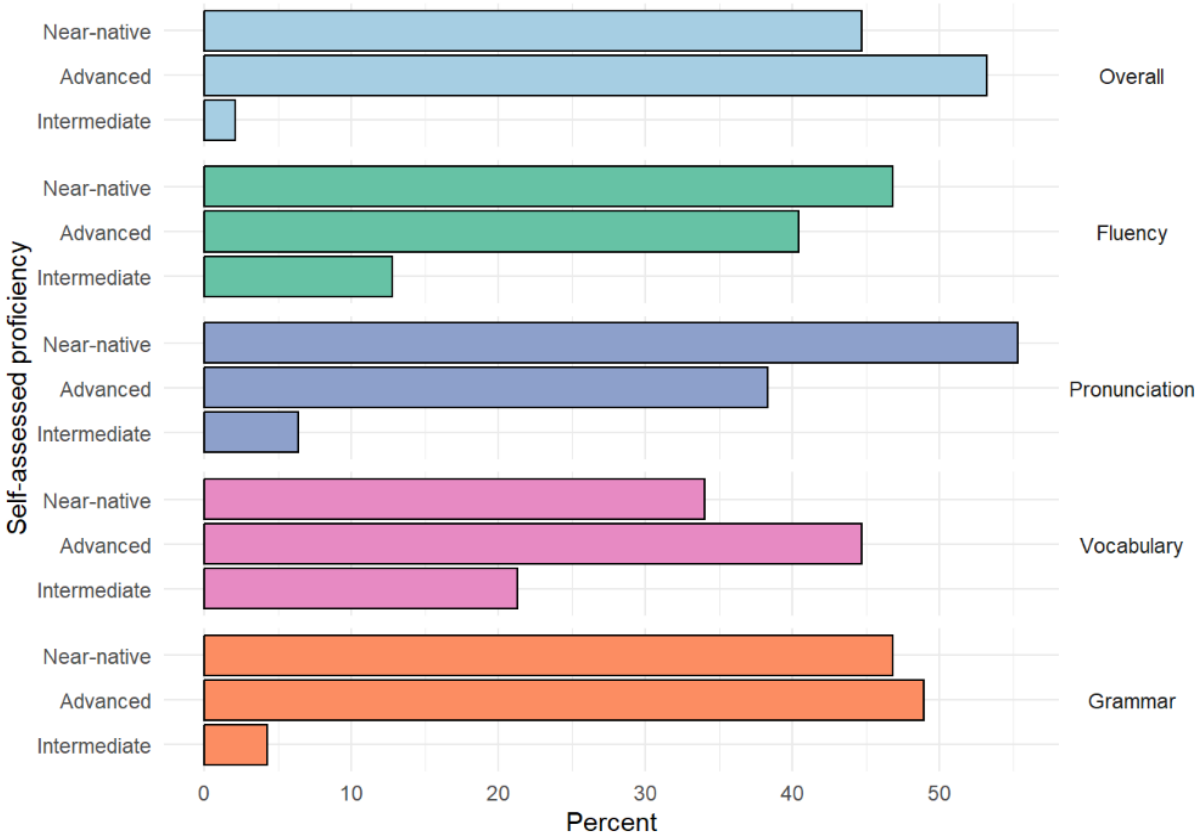
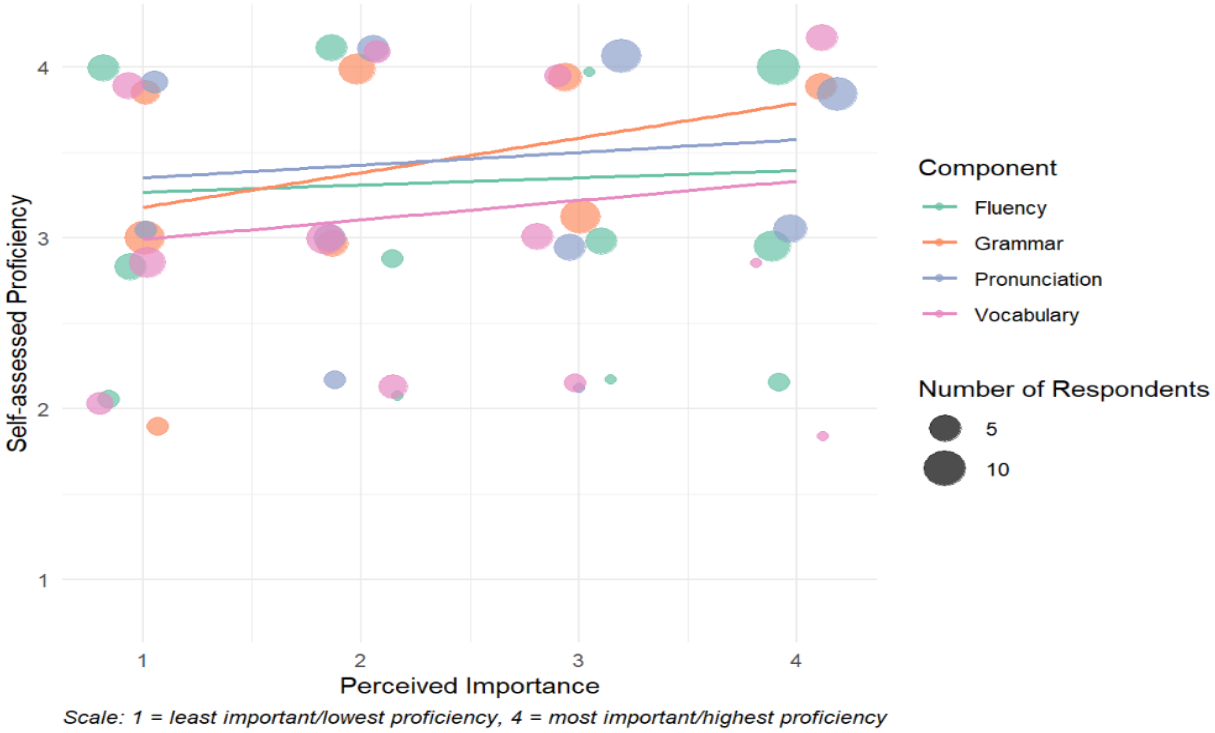


Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between perceived importance and self-assessed proficiency divided by component in a dot plot. Dot position is jittered to allow all dots to be visible, and larger dots indicate more respondents. Lines represent estimated regression tendencies. There seems to be a slight positive relationship between importance ratings and self-assessed proficiency, such that more importance and better self-assessed proficiency go hand in hand. This relationship seems to be stronger for grammar (the tendency line is steeper) than for the other components of oral proficiency.

Figure 8. Relationship between relative importance and self-assessed proficiency divided by component



Furthermore, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of oral proficiency in comparison to written proficiency ("more", "equally", or "less" important than written proficiency). Most of our respondents (83%) report that oral proficiency and written proficiency are equally important, 17% report that oral proficiency is more important, and no one reports that oral proficiency is less important than written proficiency. With respect to self-assessed oral compared to written proficiency, however, our respondents are almost equally divided between assessing their oral proficiency as weaker than their written proficiency (42.6%) and assessing their oral proficiency and written proficiency as equally strong (44.7%). Only 12.8% assess their oral proficiency as stronger than their written proficiency. Table 2 shows the relationship between relative importance of oral and written proficiency and relative self-assessment on oral and written proficiency in a cross-tabulation of number of respondents. 38.3% report the combination of equally strong proficiency and equal importance, while 29.8% report the combination of stronger written proficiency and equal importance.

Table 2. Relationship between relative importance of oral and written proficiency and relative self-assessment on oral and written proficiency. Number of respondents.

	Oral more important than written	**Equally important**	**Oral less important than written**
Stronger oral proficiency	2	4	0
Equally strong proficiency	3	18	0
Stronger written proficiency	3	17	0

Respondents who argue that oral proficiency is more important include comments such as (16), (17) and (18) below:

(16) Depends on the context, but oral proficiency is often more useful. There are tools that can easily help your written proficiency.
(17) Because written proficiency can be expanded by tools such as language models or translation options but in oral proficiency the speaker is often pressured to make their points fast, clear and coherently without the option to pause and look for tools to help.
(18) Oral proficiency is more valuable simply because basic communication seems more practical when you encounter someone who doesn't speak English. Written proficiency is only valuable in specific professional settings, usually.

As these comments show, respondents mention that different tools are available to aid in written communication, whereas no such tools are available for spoken language. In addition, when communicating with other speakers of English as a foreign language, the primary interaction will also be spoken.

Some of the respondents who chose "equally important" elaborate as follows:

(19) it's important for me to be able to communicate clearly and effectively in both oral and written English
(20) To speak and write is equally important, as it increase understanding, use and level of language
(21) They are important in different situations. For example, in group work oral proficiency is less important if you can make yourself understandable, but written proficiency is more important as the rest of the group will have to pick up the slack.
(22) I believe English communication is about balance. To be able to write and speak equally well is the goal, I'd say. Written proficiency is an advantage in school and at work, especially when communication with international collaborators involves cross-cultural research, whereas oral proficiency must be good in all face-to-face instances of talking with other users of English.

The answers reflect that the respondents are overall concerned with a sort of balance in their proficiency, as can be seen in (19), (20), (21) and (22). Many of them highlight the use of written or spoken English in different contexts, indicating that these contexts are of equal importance.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this section, we discuss our findings in relation to our research questions and the conceptual and empirical background reviewed above. We will also briefly discuss limitations of the study and present suggestions for further research.

5.1. Response to research questions

Our study set out to investigate four research questions. In this subsection, we discuss the response to each in turn, relating our results to the conceptual and empirical background reviewed above.

1. What characterizes university EFL students' English language use patterns (extent, topics, contexts, interlocutors)?

The vast majority of our respondents use English daily at university and outside of university, for both listening and dialogue, with more variation in the number of hours spent on English language

activities outside of university. As their degree programmes structure their English language activities at university, while their language use is freer outside of university, this makes sense. In connection with curricular activities, the majority use English as the primary language when talking to a lecturer in class and in supervision related to semester projects, while almost half of our respondents use English as the primary language in group work and only a third use English as the primary language when talking to a lecturer outside of class. The comments in the questionnaire revealed that the choice of language often depends on whether or not the interlocutor (be it a fellow student or a teacher) is able to speak Danish or not. Students mentioned feeling awkward speaking English with fellow students who are also Danish speakers.

Most respondents were comfortable talking about everyday practical topics, lifestyle, personal experiences and well-being, and popular culture in English, with very few expressing a wish to be more comfortable talking about these topics. Fewer respondents were comfortable talking about academic topics, business, and politics & current affairs in English, and more respondents expressed a wish to be more comfortable talking about these topics. As academic topics are central to all three degree programmes and business and politics & current affairs are central to at least one of them, it makes sense that our respondents express a stronger wish to be more comfortable talking about these topics in English. With the exception of academic topics and to some extent politics & current affairs, few respondents report wishing to be more comfortable discussing topics they are already comfortable discussing. Given the importance of academic topics at university, it seems plausible that even students who are already comfortable talking about academic topics in English wish to feel even more comfortable doing so. Furthermore, the finding corresponds with the NCFF study reporting that the challenge of the subject-specific content might exceed the linguistic challenge (Lund et al. 2025). The fact that the students express lower levels of comfortability than in the NCFF study might reflect that university EFL students have a higher awareness and higher standards in regard to their English competencies.

Most respondents speak English regularly to friends, fellow students, and teachers, while few speak English regularly to family, colleagues, employers, and clients/customers. While those who speak English to friends regularly are generally comfortable doing so, the proportion of those who speak English to fellow students and teachers regularly and who are comfortable doing so is smaller, and the proportion wishing to be more comfortable doing so is larger. This pattern is particularly pronounced with respect to talking to teachers, where the proportion of respondents who wish to feel more comfortable is larger than the proportion already feeling comfortable. The frequent and multifaceted use of spoken English, the variety of interlocutors and the overall relatively high level of comfort and ease are well aligned with previous research, some of which we have presented above. The results can also be linked to the study by Sundqvist & Uztosun (2023: 1657), which showed that "the frequency of EE [extramural English] activities promotes positive perceptions of speaking competence" and that learners who are active "reported feeling more positive about their speaking ability". Also, our findings can be related to the concept of WTC, in that we found a relatively high level of WTC amongst the respondents. However, our respondents report that a lack of authenticity in the communication situation and language anxiety can influence their WTC negatively. Moreover, compared to the responses to the question about topics, the responses relating to interlocutor types show greater variation across respondents, suggesting that patterns for interlocutors are less general than patterns for topics. We wonder whether this difference between topics and interlocutors stems only from differences in respondents' English-speaking network outside of university, or if variation in language anxiety may impact interlocutor comfort more than topic comfort.

2. What significance do university EFL students attribute to oral proficiency in English?

Our results show that most of our respondents consider written and oral proficiency equally

important, which thus partially replicates previous findings (cf. Fernández & Andersen 2019). Our finding that written proficiency is generally considered as important as oral proficiency might be because our respondents are studying EFL at an academic level. As EFL students at university, they are likely to have career plans involving written English. This observation was also shown in some of the respondents' comments. Moreover, the equal importance attached to oral and written proficiency can be understood in the light of the concept of "mediation" in the updated CEFR, which highlights that oral and written communication are often intertwined.

On average, our respondents consider fluency and pronunciation more important components of oral proficiency than grammar and vocabulary, which was also shown in some of the respondents' comments. This may relate to our respondents' formal background in English, which may have drawn their attention to typical traits of Danish-accented English. The comparatively lesser importance of grammar and maybe also vocabulary perhaps reflects a functional approach to oral proficiency, in line with CEFR's emphasis on functional language and pragmatic competencies over formal features of the language. When forced to choose, students may tend to focus on what they are able *to do* with their language skills, rather than on correctness, stylistic nuances and linguistic sophistication. In addition, some of the comments by respondents indicate that grammar is most often associated with written proficiency (and not oral proficiency), which could also explain why it is rated as being less important for oral communication in English. Fluency and pronunciation, on the other hand, are solely linked to oral proficiency and so may simply be more easily identifiable as being important to oral communication (as opposed to grammar and vocabulary, which are important for both written and oral proficiency).

3. How do university EFL students perceive their own oral proficiency in English?

The majority of our respondents report oral proficiency skills at near-native or advanced levels, both overall and with respect to the four components (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar), with vocabulary proficiency receiving the lowest self-assessments. This replicates in part the findings of Thøgersen & Preisler (2023) and Jensen et al. (2011) showing that young people see themselves as competent English users. This seems to apply to our respondents too, especially regarding pronunciation, where the vast majority of respondents see themselves as "near-native". Maybe surprisingly, it applies to a lesser extent when it comes to fluency and vocabulary. However, the self-assessment in Thøgersen & Preisler (2023) included questions involving language knowledge of a rather basic character, although at different levels. Thus, there is a discrepancy between previous results showing that EFL students experience their English competence as an "unmarked, almost natural" competence that they "just have" (Lund et al. 2025: 61), as a certain minority of our respondents see themselves at "intermediate level" in fluency and vocabulary. One reason may be that our respondents, who are studying EFL, have greater awareness of the fine nuances of English and in their study-related activities are exposed to academic work at a high linguistic level with challenging texts and exercises. This may give them an awareness that there is vocabulary they do not yet possess and therefore find fluency challenging. This might be seen as an interesting contrast to the description provided by the Danish Ministry of Education and Research, which states that students are (supposed to be) at CEFR level C1 at the time of enrolment (cf. UFM 2025a). It might also indicate that fluency has not been in focus to a sufficient degree either in the actual daily practice of the respondent or in their previous or present education.

4. What is the relationship between the significance university EFL students attribute to oral proficiency and their perceived oral proficiency?

We found a slight positive relationship between the importance that respondents assigned to a particular component of oral proficiency (fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) and their self-assessed proficiency in that component, suggesting that respondents find components they

feel proficient in more important than components they feel less proficient in, or that respondents feel more proficient in components they find important than in components they find less important. This relationship seems to be stronger for grammar than for the other components of oral proficiency. This raises the question why the relative importance of grammar is more strongly tied to grammatical proficiency in comparison to the relationships between the relative importance and self-assessed proficiency for pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary. It might be the case that the contribution of grammatical details to the overall message in an utterance is less salient than the contribution of fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary and therefore requires a certain grammatical level to be noticed as important. This stronger relationship between perceived importance and self-assessed proficiency for grammar begs further research.

The responses to the questions comparing oral and written proficiency did not show a similar positive relationship between relative importance and self-assessed proficiency as the responses to the questions about components of oral proficiency did. While more than a third of our respondents report the combination of equally strong proficiency and equal importance, a slightly smaller group of respondents say that their written proficiency is stronger than their oral proficiency and that both proficiencies are equally important. This mismatch might cause some frustration for students. Below, we consider how this issue may be investigated further.

Comparing our data with the two surveys carried out by Preisler in 1995-96 and by Thøgersen & Preisler in 2022, we must highlight the difference of the empirical basis. While the other two studies surveyed a cross-section of the Danish population, our study focused on young people with comparatively high competency in English and motivation for learning even more English. However, relevant similarities of the findings concern the use pattern of extramural English, which reflects the ubiquity of English in Danish society. The use of English in everyday life in Denmark has only increased since the two other studies due to the steady increase in mediatization and digitalisation of modern culture.

Our findings indicate that the respondents are linguistically relatively well equipped to enter the Danish job market. However, improvements can be made in regard to their use pattern of intramural English and how EFL programmes can facilitate this. We recommend that programmes place even more emphasis on using spoking English as part of curricular activities.

5.2. Limitations

The scope and design of the present study entail specific limitations, particularly in relation to sample size and generalizability. As the sample is rather small, including only students from one Danish university, it is impossible to generalize about students at Danish universities and even more so about university EFL students as such. The study does, however, provide important indications of how certain student groups perceive English oral proficiency in general and their own English oral proficiency in relation to their world.

Furthermore, certain limitations must be considered due to the data collection method and the wording of the questions in the survey. Possible bias should be acknowledged in the wording of the answers to the question regarding the relative importance of written and oral proficiency, as some respondents might be inclined to seek equilibrium, meaning that they do not want to emphasize one mode of proficiency over the other. This might have contributed to the vast majority of our respondents replying that both oral and written proficiency were equally important. Also, there seems to have been variation in respondents' understanding of the question about the topics that they were "comfortable talking about". Thus, some respondents understood the question as related to social and personal comfort when speaking about personal topics, whereas others understood it to refer to English language speaking comfort. A point that might have been responsible for incomplete answers was the restriction of the maximum number of "comfortable" topics that respondents could choose, which might have restricted the range of responses that we received. We

believe, however, that this limitation was worth the increased validity gained by forcing respondents to consider all topics. Finally, since the questions invite self-assessment and this study does not include tested competencies, the risk of social desirability-bias needs to be considered when interpreting the results. This particular type of bias means that participants may want to appear more or less competent than they actually are and answer accordingly. However, as mentioned previously, Jensen et al. (2011) argue that a number of studies have shown a positive correlation between self-assessed competence and tested competence.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

While this study provides valuable insights into students' use and self-assessment of their oral proficiency in English, further research is needed to explore additional factors and contexts that may influence communicative behaviour.

One possible avenue would be to investigate differences and similarities across the three degree programmes to see if priorities, opinions and use patterns are the same for the three student groups, or if differences in the three curricula are reflected in students' language use patterns, self-assessment and perceptions of importance. Along with the yet unanalysed data collected in this survey, such a study would involve an examination of the curricula with a view to identifying differences and similarities in the descriptions and in the emphasis on oral proficiency (and oral language skills more generally speaking) in the three programmes. Our data shows a mismatch between the importance students assign to oral and written proficiency and their own reported proficiencies in these areas, which might lead to frustration among some students. Thus, a study investigating the link to curricula could also include recommendations for degree programmes.

Another important aspect that needs to be further investigated based on the data we have collected but not analysed for the present paper is students' perception of the position of oral proficiency through the entire L2 learning process, from the first grade in primary school to university. This includes analysing to what extent students at different educational levels are instructed in oral proficiency and to what extent they are given the possibility to practice oral proficiency in their learning environment.

Due to the limitations in sample size mentioned above, an expansion of the sample size would be recommendable, i.e., expanding the study to include a survey among students at other Danish universities or even other Scandinavian universities to examine differences and similarities across educational practices and systems in relation to students' communicative behaviour. Moreover, it would be interesting to expand the investigation with focus group interviews with students to obtain further details and contexts relating to the reasons for their opinions and priorities. A thorough investigation into this field across Scandinavia would be very beneficial and helpful for the development of the teaching and acquisition of oral proficiency.

Furthermore, we would like to explore our finding that perceived importance and self-assessed proficiency are more closely connected for grammar than for fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary in order to identify what makes grammar special in this respect. Due to the complex nature of the possible reasons underlying this pattern, further exploration into this should draw primarily on qualitative methods in order to allow for details and complexities to surface in the findings.

Finally, it would be interesting to further investigate the relationship between language anxiety, self-confidence, self-assessment, and WTC. Language anxiety clearly plays a role in the students' WTC, as indicated by MacIntyre et al. (1998), both in the classroom, where students fear being judged and/or corrected by peers and instructors, and related to students' (daily) use of L2 and their lack of comfort using L2. This study has uncovered interesting differences in students' levels of comfort (or the lack of it) when talking about various topics with other people. Further investigation into this field would be of great interest, e.g., into the reasons for students being

(un)comfortable talking about specific topics, but not about others, and the relevance of the specific topics for the students' future linguistic development and career opportunities. New insights into this field would be beneficial for discussions on topics for instruction at school and university.

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Multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements: Cross-cultural considerations

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements (PSAs), focusing on their application across diverse cultural contexts to understand their impact on global communication. It explores how metaphors are structurally encoded through cognitive, visual, and textual formats, providing insights into their persuasive and communicative functions. Utilizing Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Forceville's (2008) multimodal metaphor framework, and Trompenaars' (1994; 2004) cultural dimensions, the research examines PSAs addressing global warming from both individualistic and collectivist cultural contexts. The analysis is based on a dataset of 100 global warming PSAs sourced from AdForum's international advertising database. This selection ensures that the advertisements represent a range of effective communication practices across different cultural dimensions. The study is driven by two research questions: a) How is pictorial metaphor structurally encoded across cognitive, visual, and textual modes in PSAs produced in different cultural contexts? b) What intended messages do the PSAs imply, and how do pictorial metaphors and cultural elements contribute to their communicative function? The findings reveal: 1) PSAs from individualistic cultures tend to use straightforward, visually explicit metaphors, while PSAs from communitarian cultures favor more complex, implicit metaphors, reflecting cultural preferences for directness versus contextualization. 2) The intended messages of PSAs vary by cultural context, with individualistic cultures emphasizing personal responsibility through metaphors, while collectivist cultures highlight collective action and shared responsibility. These findings demonstrate how metaphors are tailored to resonate with cultural values, contributing to the fields of advertising, cross-cultural communication, and environmental advocacy.

Keywords: Multimodal metaphors, public service advertisements, cross-cultural analysis, cultural dimensions, global communication

1. Introduction

Metaphor is among the most widely used rhetorical devices across languages, cultures, and discursive domains (Lili 2014). For Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 4 [emphasis added]), metaphor also pervades virtually every aspect of daily life: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act", they argue, "is *fundamentally* metaphorical in nature". Forceville (2008a, 2008b) further noted that in the context of marketing semiotics, metaphor functions as an essential tool in the advertiser's toolbox, enabling large and complex conceptual structures to be condensed into salient and compelling messages that emphasize value statements (Beasley & Danesi 2002) and draw attention to product benefits (Koller 2009).

Given its ability to distill complex ideas into accessible and persuasive messages, metaphor is a central element in advertising strategies, especially in shaping consumer perceptions and driving behavior. With some notable exceptions, the majority of the literature on metaphor in advertising tends to be industry-oriented, which is to say, frequently focusing on the economic implications of the persuasive power of metaphor to encourage consumers to purchase products (Morgan & Reichert 1999; Pollaroli & Rocci 2015; Hornik et al. 2017; Septianto et al. 2022). Nevertheless, the application of metaphor in the specific context of public service advertisements (PSAs) has received comparatively little attention over the past two decades. This oversight is surprising due to the unique objectives and constraints characterizing this advertising subdomain. After all, like their product- and brand-oriented counterparts, PSAs must be carefully designed to attract and retain attention in order to effectively communicate a message to a specific audience in a manner that is succinct, salient, and

compelling. However, because PSAs primarily focus on shared social concerns, such as global warming, rather than narrowly targeting consumer purchasing intentions or brand perception, their success depends on overcoming unique challenges, including balancing issue complexity with narrative salience, expressivity, and clear calls to action. At the same time, due to the increasingly global nature not only of economic exchanges and discourses, but also of pressing crises like climate change, and environmental degradation among others, PSAs must increasingly be oriented toward delivering messages with a high degree of salience between and across social and cultural boundaries. The universality of certain kinds of metaphors and metaphoric thinking highlighted by cognitive-linguistic analysis, in turn, suggests that PSAs may exhibit interesting and potentially distinct approaches to using metaphors in order to maximize their expressivity and salience. Building on this observation, this study aims to examine the use of metaphor, and particularly pictorial metaphor, between and across cultural contexts by way of a theoretically grounded analysis of pictorial advertisements.

This paper is structured as follows: after the Introduction, the Literature Review surveys existing studies on metaphor in advertising, focusing on both product-oriented and PSA campaigns. The following Theoretical Grounding section outlines the key frameworks applied in this analysis, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory, pictorial metaphors, and Trompenaars' cultural dimensions. In the Data Analysis, selected global warming PSAs are examined through cognitive, visual, textual, and cultural lenses. The Discussion explores key insights from the analysis, while the Conclusion summarizes the findings and suggests areas for future research.

2. Literature review

Based on the existent body of empirical studies (Shan et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2019; Khakhalova & Tretiakova 2021), it appears that much of the literature treating the use of metaphor in advertising is industry-oriented (Kim et al. 2017; Boujena et al. 2021) and thus emphasizes the perception and interpretation of advertising metaphors by different audiences, and how this, in turn, changes their behavior as consumers (Burgers et al. 2015; Mohanty & Ratnewshwar 2015). Malefyt (2003), for instance, discusses the value of the metaphorical and figurative language that underpins the construction of an advertisement as a discourse between agency, client, and audience, while Ang & Lim (2006: 39) investigate whether and to what extent product-oriented advertisements have a "synergistic or compensatory effect on brand personality perceptions" as a function of the product's classification as either utilitarian or symbolic.

In a related vein, cross-cultural explorations of advertising content have long identified the use of metaphor as a topic of interest but frequently treat that topic as being of indirect or tangential relevance to more action-oriented research. Javalgi et al. (1995) in their analysis of print advertisements in the US and Japan, for instance, treat the use of metaphor as one of many components of advertisement material and thus primarily seek to identify their presence in the ads they analyze (e.g., by deriving frequency distributions), rather than conducting a more in-depth exploration of the logic of the metaphors themselves.

It has been claimed that visual metaphors are used more often in advertising targeted at (and to some extent emerging from) high-context cultures, while verbal metaphors tend to dominate in low-context cultures, as high-context cultures favor visual metaphors that require shared cultural understanding, while low-context cultures tend to use verbal metaphors that rely on straightforward, explicit messaging (De Mooij 2000; Peterson 2018; Xu et al. 2021).

Consequently, the structure and use of metaphor in advertising are often seen as culturally contingent, depending on the broader context of advertising strategies employed. These strategies are designed to resonate within cultural perspectives that may vary, such as long-term versus short-term variation (Cox 2006), or alternatively, with respect to their relative emphasis on collectivism versus

individualism (Hofstede & McCrae 2004; De Mooij & Hofstede 2010; Pham 2022). Collectivism and individualism are cultural dimensions that significantly influence communication styles and advertising strategies. In collectivist cultures, commonly found in many Asian, African, and Hispanic societies, individuals prioritize group harmony, familial ties, and community over personal goals. Communication in these cultures tends to be indirect and context-rich, often relying on implicit messages and shared understandings. Advertisements in collectivist cultures frequently emphasize group benefits, relationships, and collective well-being (Oyserman et al. 2002; Kim 2024). Conversely, in individualistic cultures, prevalent in Western countries like the United States and much of Europe, personal freedom, autonomy, and self-expression are highly valued. Communication is typically direct and explicit, with advertising strategies focusing on personal achievement, uniqueness, and individual benefits (Pham 2022). In a similar manner, De Mooij (2000) claims that Japanese advertising is known for its indirectness, a style often facilitated by verbal metaphors with double entendre. Furthermore, the use of "metaphor and drama" (De Mooij 2000: 83–84, 85) to foster indirect statements and the construction of narratives with multiple meanings has also been identified in certain Hispanic and African cultures, and specifically those which are relatively "collectivistic and short-term oriented".

Similarly, Lantolf & Bobrova (2012) explore the cultural aspect of advertisements and the use of multimodal metaphor in American and Ukrainian beer commercials, revealing substantive variations between the two cultures with respect to the "mappings and entailments" of the metaphors in a number of salient dimensions. According to Lantolf & Bobrova (2012), the difference reflects not only divergent advertising strategies but also distinct cultural perceptions of happiness, beer drinking, friendship, and patriotism, as TV commercials are shaped by culturally constructed, psychologically relevant metaphors. Extending this cross-cultural examination of metaphor in advertising, Lai (2016) employs Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to examine cosmetics advertising slogans in English and Chinese, uncovering how metaphors reflect underlying cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes. In a related study, Yu and Lee (2024) examine K-Beauty advertising and demonstrate how conceptual metaphors are strategically employed to reflect culturally embedded notions of beauty. Their findings highlight that the persuasive power of metaphoric advertising is closely linked to cultural cognition and the cognitive mechanisms shaped by the target audience's cultural background.

3. Theoretical grounding

For the analysis of metaphors in advertisements, several methodological frameworks exist. Of these, Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is among the most influential and widely recognized ones, a point emphasized by, e.g., Boers (2003) and Kövecses (2008). Conceptual metaphors enable language users to construe complex or abstract phenomena in terms of physical, more basic experiences in the process of cognitive mappings from a source to a target domain. For instance, the abstract concept of "time" is frequently conceptualized through the source domain of "money," as in phrases like "saving time" or "spending time," thus the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 8). Similarly, emotions are often understood via physical states. "Anger," for example, is commonly mapped to a "heated fluid in a container," leading to expressions such as "boiling with rage" or "letting off steam," forming the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT (Kövecses 2008). These examples illustrate the wide applicability of CMT in explaining how abstract ideas are rooted in everyday physical experiences. Likewise, according to Lucek (2017), the abstract target concept "love" can be expressively represented through its assimilation into more "concrete" source concepts like containers, such as in phrases like "falling into love" or "getting out of love". This metaphorical mapping of abstract concepts onto concrete source domains is an intuitive claim, but nonetheless one which has been used in diverse disciplines ranging from philosophy and

computer science to cultural anthropology and advertising (Lucek 2017: 116–117).

CMT has been further expanded to explore its potential multimodal applications (Forceville 1994, 2008b; Rohrer 2001; Serig 2008). Specifically in the context of advertising, Forceville (1994, 2008b) has stressed the importance of looking at metaphors not only in language but also in terms of their manifestations in different modalities, such as pictures, sounds, music, gestures or even smell. In service of this goal, Forceville (2008b) subsequently proposed a classification of pictorial metaphors which includes: (1) contextual metaphors*,* containing a contextual element that cues the source domain and links it to another object which is metaphoric in the image — for instance, an advertisement showing a cracked, barren desert juxtaposed with a parched human hand to metaphorically equate water scarcity with human suffering; (2) hybrid metaphors*,* presenting two objects (the target and source domains), that normally would be considered as different entities, merged into one object — such as an image of a lightbulb combined with a tree to convey the idea of eco-friendly innovation; and (3) integrated metaphor*,* featuring an object that is shown as a whole in such a way that it, without any contextual cues, resembles another object due to the positioning or shape — for example, a mountain shaped like a melting ice cream cone to signify the impact of climate change on glaciers.

Forceville (2008b) concludes that important aspects of the metaphors' meaning-making process are not universal cognitive phenomena, but culturally contingent. Specifically, culture provides a lens which can shape not only the nature of the connection between the source and target domains in an advertisement, but also how sources may be used to foreground certain aspects of a target while backgrounding others (Forceville 2008b: 28). This perspective is supported by research in various cultural contexts, such as Jeong's (2008) examination of visual metaphors in advertising, which highlights how cultural interpretations influence metaphorical effectiveness. Similarly, Yu (2009) illustrates how Chinese cultural values shape metaphorical expressions.

With this in mind, the present study is grounded not only in CMT but also in Trompenaars' classification of cultural dimensions (1994, 2004), which facilitates cross-cultural analysis. He identifies four dimensions of national culture that are relevant to the present investigation: (1) individualism / communitarianism, describing whether a society emphasizes personal autonomy or collective responsibility; (2) specific / diffuse, distinguishing cultures that prefer clear, structured, and goal-oriented communication from those that take a more holistic, contextual, and interconnected approach; (3) neutral / affective, indicating the degree to which emotions are openly expressed in communication; and (4) internal / external, assessing whether people perceive themselves as controlling their environment or adapting to external circumstances. These dimensions provide a structured approach to understanding cultural tendencies and their influence on metaphor interpretation (Trompenaars & Prud'Homme 2004; Koc 2020; Hurtado et al. 2024).

However, it is important to acknowledge that Trompenaars' framework has faced criticism for potential overgeneralization, as it condenses complex cultural traits into simplified binary categories. For example, cultures often exhibit a mix of individualistic and communitarian behaviors depending on the context, such as personal relationships versus organizational dynamics (Minkov 2013). While these critiques highlight a need for caution when the model is applied, its practical utility and wide adoption in cross-cultural studies make it a valuable tool for identifying general patterns of cultural influence (Rodić 2020; Wei 2024). In the present study, Trompenaars' dimensions serve as a guiding framework to explore how cultural values shape the use and interpretation of multimodal metaphors in public service advertisements, while the need for a nuanced application of the model is recognized.

4. Methodological considerations

The present section states the main research questions, accounts for the selection of research materials and outlines analytical procedures.

Specifically, the study addresses two research questions:

1. How is pictorial metaphor expressed through conceptual mappings and structured across the visual and textual modality in PSAs produced in different cultural contexts?

2. What is the intended message of the different PSAs and how does pictorial metaphor as well as cultural aspects contribute to its primary function?

To answer these questions, the data combining examples of the PSAs addressing the issue of global warming was collected within the timeframe of 2013–2023 from the international advertising data base, *AdForum* (Maydream, Inc. 2020). Since 1999, AdForum has offered a digital platform for advertising agencies and production companies to display their creativity. It caters to 25,000 members and serves as a key voice in the advertising industry, featuring a creative library of more than 200,000 campaigns. While the present study analyzes 100 PSAs to explore the use of metaphor across cognitive, visual, textual, and cultural dimensions, only a selection is presented for detailed discussion. The PSAs were selected from the AdForum database based on the following criteria: (1) thematic relevance: the campaigns explicitly addressed the issue of global warming, including climate change, rising temperatures, or environmental degradation; (2) format: only static or print-based PSAs were included to ensure consistency in visual analysis; and (3) accessibility: only PSAs with publicly available high-resolution visuals (e.g., minimum 300 dpi, suitable for detailed analysis) and descriptive metadata (e.g., country of origin, year, and agency) were considered. From this larger sample, six PSAs were chosen for in-depth discussion based on their capability to exemplify various conceptual mappings and key cultural dimensions identified in the dataset. This approach ensures that the discussion remains focused and representative of the overall findings.

Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) CMT, Forceville's (2008) classification of pictorial metaphors, and Trompenaars' (1994, 2004) cultural dimensions framework are used to analyze the collected data. The study preliminarily examines how conceptual metaphor is structurally encoded in printed PSAs through visual and textual modalities, while also identifying the underlying cognitive mappings (i.e., source–target domain structures) and the communicative functions these metaphors serve in the posters. Primary functions refer to the central purpose of an advertisement, such as raising awareness of a social issue or encouraging a specific action, while secondary functions pertain to additional effects or subtler messages, such as reinforcing cultural values or creating emotional resonance. In regard to the cultural aspect, the key dimensions and unique cultural characteristics reflected in an advertisement are further discussed. Table 1 summarizes the analytical process.

Table 1. Analysis of pictorial metaphors in social issues advertisements

Cognitive structure	How is the conceptual metaphor embodied? What are the source and target domains?
Pictorial mode	Is it a contextual / hybrid / integrated metaphor?
Textual mode	What is the slogan of the PSA? Are there any other textual elements on the poster?
Function	What is the intended message of the advertisement? What are its primary and secondary functions?
Culture	What is the primary cultural dimension? What cultural elements contribute to the message of the advertisement?

5. Data analysis

This section analyzes the structural and conceptual compositions of a select number of examples. The examples discussed in the subsequent sections were selected from the larger dataset based on their recognition in advertising awards, including those that won prizes or received honorable mentions. This recognition was used as an indicator of communicative effectiveness, suggesting that the metaphorical message was successfully conveyed and understood by a broad audience. This criterion helps ensure that the selected PSAs provide clear and analyzable instances of metaphor use, suitable for detailed interpretation.

5.1. "The Earth is No Toy" campaign

According to Forceville (2008), metaphors in advertising often reveal underlying cultural values by making abstract concepts more tangible. This can be seen in the use of metaphors that challenge political leaders' inaction on environmental issues, reflecting societal expectations for accountability and change. The example chosen for detailed analysis is "The Earth is No Toy" (Fridays for Future 2023, accessed July 2024) (see Table 2), a PSA campaign developed in anticipation of Earth Day 2023. This award-winning campaign, which features G20 leaders addressing the climate crisis, received first place in the Public Interest–Environment category at the 2023 Epica Awards.

Table 2. Analytical summary of "The Earth is No Toy"

A. Country	The United States
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE CHILDREN'S GAMES Source domain: A young political leader holding the Earth as if it were a ball Target domain: A political leader making decisions regarding the climate crisis

D. Pictorial mode	Integrated metaphor
E. Textual mode	The slogan: Earth is no toy (capitalized letters) Other texts: Earth day, Fridays for future
F. Function	Intended message: Political leaders' meetings about the global warming crisis lack urgency, suggesting they must take the issue more seriously. Primary function: To critique the ineffective and immature decisions made by political leaders on the climate crisis and to draw the general public's attention to this pressing issue. Secondary function: To call for action to stop global warming
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: Internal

The advertisement in Table 2 creatively portrays the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as a child. While she is depicted performing adult responsibilities, such as posing in front of the European Union's flag, dressed in a suit, and holding a notebook, the ad subtly introduces a contrasting element. In the lower left corner of the poster, there is a ball, which, upon closer inspection, resembles the Earth. This visual juxtaposition sets the stage for a metaphorical message.

The advertisement is dominated by the slogan "Earth is no toy", which in combination with the image clearly articulates the metaphor POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE CHILDREN'S GAMES (see line C in Table 2). Additional texts on the poster, such as "Earth Day" and "Fridays for Future", while not directly contributing to the metaphorical concept, align the campaign with global movements advocating for environmental action. At the same time, the visual elements play a crucial role in constructing this integrated metaphor. It merges the source and target domains into a single, cohesive visual element, making the metaphor both immediate and impactful. In this case, the Earth is depicted as a toy, altering the overall interpretation of the poster.

Consequently, the PSA focuses on highlighting the importance of treating climate change as a serious issue, and instead of directly urging the general public's involvement, it motivates government bodies and decision-makers to prioritize and address the climate crisis with the gravity it deserves (see line F in Table 2).

In addition, the advertisement also serves a broader purpose. It aims to bring attention to the challenges of making effective decisions regarding global warming and indirectly invites the public to the conversation. By involving viewers in the interpretation of the metaphorical imagery, the ad encourages a collective call for meaningful action to address the environmental issue on both national and global scales.

The cultural dimension of internal control greatly influences the execution and message of the PSA. In cultures with a strong sense of internal control, there is a widespread belief that individuals and leaders have the power and responsibility to influence and change their circumstances (Cox 2006; Rodić 2020). This cultural mindset is reflected in the PSA's focus on encouraging political leaders to take decisive action on climate change. It aligns with the cultural emphasis on individual responsibility, urging decision-makers to use their power effectively and treat critical global issues with the seriousness they deserve. This reflects the broader American cultural value of taking control over one's environment and making impactful decisions, which is central to the advertisement intended message.

5.2. "The Climate League–Earth Day" campaign

This section examines the use of metaphor and cultural references in "The Climate League–Earth Day" (Climate Reality Group 2015, accessed July 2024) campaign to convey the reality of climate

change and challenge misconceptions. The PSA featured in Table 3 was also nominated for the 2015 Epica Awards in the Public Interest–Environment category, where it secured second place.

Table 3. Analytical summary of "The Climate League–Earth Day"

A. Country	The United States
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: CLIMATE DENIAL IS MYTHICAL THINKING Source domain: Mythical thinking (e.g., belief in Bigfoot, supernatural creatures, folklore) Target domain: Climate change denial (irrational disbelief in scientifically proven climate change)
D. Pictorial mode	Contextual metaphor
E. Textual mode	The slogan: 21% of people in the Pacific Northwest think (small letters) Bigfoot exists (capitalized letters). 27% of people think (small letters) climate change does not (capitalized letters). Other texts: #ClimateChangeIsReal, Climate Reality Group
F. Function	Intended message: Denying the reality of climate change is as irrational and unfounded as believing in mythical creatures like Bigfoot. Primary function: To raise awareness of the imminence of the climate crisis if it is neglected. Secondary function: To stimulate common sense in the general public.
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: Neutral Contributing cultural elements: The Bigfoot legend

The layout of this PSA presents a beast-like figure with its entire body and face covered in fur that also appears human, based on its pose and facial expression. This humanoid creature is placed in a deserted landscape, which, combined with the slogan on the poster (see line E in Table 3), suggests that the figure is Bigfoot, a mythical creature believed to inhabit remote forests and wilderness areas. The slogan further implies that a significant portion of people believe in the existence of Bigfoot (21%) while a slightly larger percentage (27%) deny the reality of climate change, with other textual elements, such as "#ClimateChangeIsReal" and "Climate Reality Group", reinforcing this environmental theme by emphasizing the factual and scientific basis of global warming. These elements serve as anchors that connect the ad to broader environmental advocacy movements and support the intended message by equating disbelief in climate change with superstition and myth-based thinking.

When applying the meaning uncovered in the textual mode to the image, it becomes clear that climate change is depicted as so real that it even affects mythical creatures like Bigfoot, who faces deforestation and the loss of his natural habitat. The combination of the pictorial reference to the Bigfoot folklore legend and the textual presentation of concrete facts and statistics results in the formation of the conceptual metaphor CLIMATE DENIAL IS MYTHICAL THINKING (see line C in Table 3). This metaphor challenges viewers to reconsider the logic of denying climate change by equating it with belief in a fictional creature, thereby reinforcing the need for evidence-based thinking.

The interplay between text and image in the PSA poster is crucial for effectively communicating the intended message about the urgent environmental issue, with the text in a leading role. Without it, the ad could be misinterpreted, e.g., to the effect that Bigfoot is simply visiting Death Valley, a desert in the United States. The image reinforces the message and also contributes to the formation of the contextual type of metaphor, as it relies on the context in which Bigfoot is placed. While the mythical creature Bigfoot remains in his usual form, the meaning of his presence in nature changes due to his placement in an unnatural habitat. Consequently, this PSA intends to raise awareness about the imminent climate crisis if it continues to be neglected or denied (see line F in Table 3). However, considering that a multimodal metaphor is structurally encoded in the poster, it could be suggested that the secondary function of the ad is to stimulate common sense in the general public.

The PSA's use of a neutral cultural dimension is also reflected in its restrained and factual approach to communication. According to Trompenaars' (1994) framework, in neutral cultures, emotions are typically controlled, which means that the communication style tends to be more restrained and less overtly emotional (Deng & Gibson 2009; Rodić 2020). Although the PSA's underlying message critiques the irrationality of climate change denial (a stance that carries evaluative weight) the delivery remains measured and indirect. It uses a calm juxtaposition of statistics and myth rather than sensational language or dramatic visual effects. While the image of a parched landscape may evoke negative connotations, the overall tone of the PSA relies more on logical contrast and irony than emotional dramatization. Thus, it aligns with a neutral communication style that emphasizes cognitive engagement over affective display.

The cultural element of Bigfoot in particular is also crucial to the PSA's message as it introduces a layer of cultural specificity that might influence how the advertisement poster is understood by different audiences. The metaphorical use of Bigfoot in the PSA works effectively in the context, where the creature is a familiar cultural reference to draw a parallel between believing in a mythical creature and denying the scientifically supported reality of global warming.

5.3. "#2CTROP" campaign

The "#2CTROP" (WWF 2015, accessed July 2024) campaign is a visually compelling PSA that uses strong imagery and cultural references to raise awareness about the dangers of global warming. The "#2CTROP", which stands for "Two Degrees is Already Too Much" (see Table 4) was executed for WWF, one of the world's largest and most influential conservation organizations, which works globally to protect the environment and promote sustainable living. The campaign was further nominated in the category of Public Interest–Environment at the 2015 Epica Awards, where it won second place.

The important aspect of "#2CTROP" is that it was created in the light of the United Nations' climate conference in Paris (COP 21), which aimed to achieve a universal climate agreement between the world's governments. It was widely expected that the agreement would aim to limit the average global temperature increase to no more than two degrees by the end of the century. However, according to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018), scientific reports suggest that even

a two-degree rise in global temperature would lead to disastrous consequences, including the extinction of numerous animal species and more frequent natural disasters.

Table 4. Analytical summary of "#2CTROP"

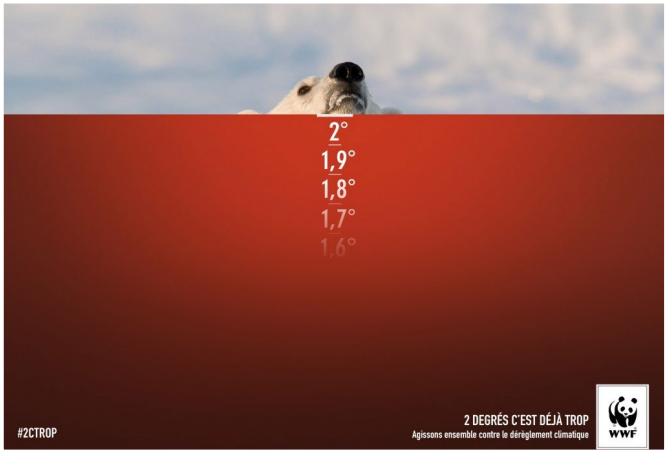
A. Country	France
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: RISING TEMPERATURES ARE A KILLER Source domain: Lethal force (e.g., drowning, suffocation, death) Target domain: Rising global temperatures due to climate change
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	The slogan: Two degrees is already too much (capitalized letters) Other texts: Let's act together against climate change
F. Function	Intended message: Even though a two-degree rise in temperature may seem insignificant, it could already be deadly for animal species. Primary function: To raise awareness about global warming by graphically representing a polar bear struggling to survive. Secondary function: A call to action to stop global warming.
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: Affective & Communitarian Contributing cultural elements: Celsius temperature system

Table 4 illustrates how the "#2CTROP" campaign effectively uses visual elements to convey a powerful metaphor about the dangers of rising temperatures. The advertisement presents a disturbing image of a polar bear struggling to breathe, as if it is drowning. The emotional impact is heightened through the hybridization of the polar bear's head with a rising temperature scale against a bright red background. The red color can trigger a sense of danger and urgency. This fusion, where characteristics of both elements contribute significantly to the meaning-making process, reflects a hybrid multimodal metaphor that can be conceptualized as RISING TEMPERATURES ARE A KILLER (see line C in Table 4).

The advertisement's intended message heavily depends on its use of pictorial metaphors to evoke an emotional response. Although the text shown in line E in Table 4 further explains the rising temperature in the context of global warming, the main emotional impact remains rooted in the image. While some viewers may not immediately connect the rising temperatures alone to the climate crisis, if presented without additional context, the inclusion of the polar bear as a visual element strongly reinforces this connection. The bear, a widely recognized symbol of the consequences of global warming, helps viewers interpret the rising temperature scale as a metaphor for the climate crisis.

This is further supported by the widespread narrative of rising temperatures, melting icebergs, and the plight of polar bears. Therefore, the intended message of this PSA is twofold: to raise awareness about the deadly consequences of global warming by evoking an emotional response to its provocative metaphorical depiction and to urge meaningful action at community, national, and global levels.

As indicated in line G in Table 4, one of the leading cultural dimensions reflected in the PSA is the affective dimension. According to Mayer (2015) and Timbalari (2019), communication in central and southern Europe often emphasizes emotional expression and strong emotional appeals, which are widely used in public messaging and social campaigns. The "#2CTROP" campaign taps into this cultural trait by using a striking image, which immediately evokes a sense of urgency and empathy. The bright red background further intensifies the emotional impact, making the message more compelling to the viewer. The fusion of the rising temperature scale with the drowning polar bear dramatizes the consequences of global warming, aligning with the cultural preference for vivid emotional expression to convey important social messages.

The communitarian dimension as shown in line E in Table 4 ("Let's act together against climate change") emphasizes collective responsibility and action to combat global warming, resonating with communitarian values stressing the well-being of the community over individual interests (Trompenaars & Prud'Homme 2004).

The use of the Celsius temperature system as a cultural element in the PSA also contributes to the message's effectiveness within contexts where Celsius is the standard, such as much of Europe. The specific reference to a two-degree rise in temperature is immediately understandable to the audience familiar with Celsius. However, the audiences from the countries like the United States, Bahamas or Belize, where Fahrenheit is the standard, may not intuitively grasp the severity of a two-degree Celsius increase, which could lead to a less effective emotional and cognitive response to the PSA's message.

5.4. "Evolution" campaign

This section examines the "Evolution" (WWF 2009, accessed July 2024) PSA campaign (see Table 5), which utilizes metaphor and visual storytelling to address the consequences of global warming through the concept of human evolution. The campaign was produced for the same client, WWF. It received an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2009. These tributes recognize and celebrate creative work in the advertising industry that promotes social and environmental responsibility. The tributes are part of the broader ACT Responsible movement, which stands for Advertising Community Together Responsible. This movement aims to inspire, promote, and celebrate advertising that makes a positive impact on society.

Table 5. Analytical summary of "Evolution"

A. Country	Romania
B. Layout	

C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DECLINE Source domain: Evolutionary reversal Target domain: The existential consequences of global warming (rising oceans, potential extinction)
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	Other texts: WWF for a living planet
F. Function	Intended message: Human evolution has reached a stage where, by harming nature, humans are also initiating the process of self-extinction. Primary function: To raise awareness of the serious consequences of global warming, which may lead to the extinction of the human race. Secondary function: To highlight that it is humans who are bringing this destruction upon themselves.
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: Diffuse Contributing cultural elements: The theory of evolution by natural selection

Table 5 illustrates how the PSA addresses the climate crisis through a metaphorical depiction of human evolution. The visual design heavily relies on the iconic "March of Progress" image. The left side of the PSA poster reproduces this famous sequence, depicting the evolution of humans from a primitive, ape-like ancestor to modern humans walking upright. However, the poster adds two more figures, showing humans entering the ocean, which emphasizes regression and decline. The upward progression depicted in the earlier stages of the evolutionary sequence is reversed as the figures move downwards into an environment where humans cannot survive, symbolizing the extinction of the human race.

Although the PSA does not explicitly mention global warming, the visual element of ocean water aligns with the common narrative that climate change will lead to rising ocean levels and the gradual submersion of continents. Accordingly, the cognitive structure of the pictorial metaphor embedded in this visual layout can be verbalized as the conceptual metaphor GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DECLINE.

In terms of pictorial mode, the combination of elements suggests a hybrid type of metaphor. The layout blends the graphic representation of natural selection with the added figures and the ocean, creating a new metaphorical representation that predicts human regression / the decline of mankind. Given the absence of a slogan on this poster (see line E in Table 5), it is clear that the multimodal metaphor is constructed solely through the pictorial mode.

The intended message of the "Evolution" campaign is to visually convey that humanity's development has reached a point where, by harming nature, humans are also initiating the process of self-extinction. Consequently, the primary function of the PSA is to raise awareness of the severe consequences of global warming, while the secondary, subtler function is to highlight that humans are responsible for bringing this destruction upon themselves.

The cultural dimension reflected in the PSA is diffuse, characterized by a holistic communication style where messages, themes, and contexts are intricately interwoven (Trompenaars & Prud'Homme 2004). This diffuse orientation is evident in how the PSA visually blends the concept of human existence (through the universally recognizable narrative of human evolution) with the environmental responsibility related to global warming. Rather than explicitly isolating the issue of climate change, the poster integrates it seamlessly into the broader narrative of human evolutionary progression, making the two inseparable. By merging these ideas, the PSA effectively conveys that ignoring climate change jeopardizes the very existence and continuity of humanity, thus communicating its message through the culturally diffuse strategy of integrating diverse but related thematic elements into one unified visual and conceptual representation.

Likewise, the cultural element of the theory of natural selection plays a significant role in conveying the PSA's message. The advertisement draws a parallel between natural evolutionary success and the potential decline caused by environmental destruction. In contexts where the theory of evolution is widely accepted, the PSA's metaphor is likely to be impactful, as viewers can immediately grasp the contrast between natural progression and forced regression due to global warming.

5.5. "Global Warming–WWF" campaign

The "Global Warming–WWF" (WWF 2008, accessed July 2024) campaign, as outlined in Table 6, uses metaphorical imagery to highlight the effects of global warming on animals and emphasize the need for action. It is another environmental campaign, which, like "Evolution", received an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2008.

Table 6. Analytical summary of "Global Warming–WWF"

A. Country	Finland
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: AFFECTED ANIMALS ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE Source domain: Urban homeless people Target domain: Animals affected by global warming who have lost their natural habitat
D. Pictorial mode	Contextual metaphor
E. Textual mode	The slogan: You can help stop global warming (capitalized letters) Other texts: Animals around the world are losing their habitats due to climate change. By recycling glass, plastic, cardboard and paper you can help prevent this. Take action right now. www.wwf.fi (small letters)
F. Function	Intended message: Due to the negative impact of global warming, animals are losing their natural habitats. Primary function: To raise awareness of the problem of animals losing their homes. Secondary function: A call for individual action to reduce the negative impact of global warming.
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: Specific & Individualistic Contributing cultural elements: Practices of urban homeless people

Table 6 illustrates how the "Global Warming–WWF" campaign effectively uses pictorial metaphors to create a compelling narrative about the impact of climate change. The advertisement is visually constructed as a comparison between animals, specifically penguins, that are losing their natural habitats due to the negative effects of global warming, such as the melting of glaciers, and homeless people, who are similarly affected by weather changes, as they burn garbage in a barrel to keep warm. The juxtaposition of visual elements like penguins and the urban environment associated with houseless individuals initiates the conceptual metaphor AFFECTED ANIMALS ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE.

The "Global Warming–WWF" campaign visually employs a contextual metaphor as penguins are depicted in their natural form, without any human attributes such as clothing. Their standing posture is also natural to their usual environment. However, the context in which they are placed, in particular, dirty city backstreets with garbage cans, an area typically avoided by people, and the burning barrel in front of the penguins, leads the viewer to associate them with homeless people.

Although the visual elements in this PSA are largely self-explanatory, they are reinforced by the slogan (see line E in Table 6). Consequently, the image represents the primary focus of the PSA, which aims to raise awareness that many animal species are losing their natural habitats and becoming homeless due to the negative impact of global warming. Moreover, the metaphorical parallel to homelessness in cities serves to highlight that if citizens show empathy towards unsheltered people, they should also extend their concern to homeless animals. At the same time, the secondary function of this PSA, anchored solely in the textual element, is a call for specific individual actions, such as recycling, and more broadly, efforts to mitigate the effects of global warming.

The specific and individualistic cultural dimensions reflected in the "Global Warming–WWF" poster are deeply rooted in the textual mode of this PSA campaign. In specific European cultures, communication tends to be direct, clear, and focused on concrete actions (Deng & Gibson 2009; Polat 2019). The PSA exemplifies this by providing straightforward action in its slogan: "You can help stop global warming". The message is unambiguous and tailored to individual responsibility, encouraging personal involvement in fighting climate change through specific actions such as recycling. This approach aligns with the individualistic nature of Finnish culture, where personal responsibility and autonomy are usually highly valued (Trompenaars 2004).

The aspect of urban homeless practices also contributes to conveying the PSA's message, while it is uniquely tied to specific cultural contexts. The image of penguins, typically associated with cold climates, juxtaposed with an urban environment where homeless people use burning metal canisters to keep warm, creates a powerful metaphor that may resonate strongly in contexts familiar with such practices. In Finland, Norway or Sweden, where cold weather is a significant challenge that has historically shaped infrastructure and daily life, the imagery of using fire for warmth is instantly relatable. However, in cultures with different climates or where the practices of homeless city residents differ (for example, in warmer regions, where keeping warm is less of an issue), the metaphor might not be as profound. People from these cultures may not fully grasp the specific hardships conveyed by the PSA, potentially reducing the overall effectiveness of the message.

5.6. "Time Travel" campaign

This section examines the "Time Travel" (Time Travel Agency 2007, accessed July 2024) campaign, which conveys the apocalyptic consequences of climate change. Unlike the other campaigns, this PSA (see Table 7) was commissioned by the Time Travel Agency, a company offering tourist services rather than a nonprofit organization. The advertising campaign was also awarded an honorable mention at the ACT Responsible Tributes in 2007.

Table 7. Analytical summary of "Time Travel"

A. Country	Czech Republic
B. Layout	
C. Cognitive structure	Conceptual metaphor: A FUTURE WORLD IS AN APOCALYPTIC WORLD Source domain: An apocalyptic world that has undergone catastrophic destruction Target domain: A future world impacted by global warming
D. Pictorial mode	Hybrid metaphor
E. Textual mode	The slogan: Last minute London before climate change (capitalized letters)
F. Function	Intended message: If immediate measures are not implemented to address climate change, cities will become uninhabitable in the future. Primary function: To raise awareness of the potential catastrophic transformation of cities due to climate change. Secondary function: To encourage immediate tourism ("last minute travel") before such catastrophic scenarios potentially occur.
G. Culture	The leading cultural dimension: External Contributing cultural elements: London Bridge

Table 7 illustrates how the "Time Travel" PSA employs a hybrid metaphor to convey the catastrophic effects. The poster is visually constructed by fusing the top part of the famous London sightseeing site, London Bridge, with the raised waters of the ocean submerging the entire city of London. The inclusion of global warming in the slogan leads to the cognitive perception of the poster's message as representing the multimodal conceptual metaphor A FUTURE WORLD IS AN APOCALYPTIC WORLD. The visual composition of the PSA indicates that the metaphor belongs to the hybrid type. This is validated by the fusion of two distinct elements, London Bridge and the submerged city.

The slogan "Last minute London before climate change" in the advertisement is intricately connected to its visual elements, creating a layered message. At first glance, the slogan may not be easy to grasp, as the visuals already depict an irreversible catastrophic transformation of the UK

capital, while the textual element states "Last minute London before climate change". Given that this advertisement was part of a Travel Agency's campaign, the slogan should be interpreted through the lens of tourism. Specifically, it subtly invites potential tourists to visit famous destinations before it is too late. The phrase "last minute London" echoes the familiar phrase in tourism, "last minute call", urging travelers not to miss an opportunity. However, even without a clear understanding of the client behind this campaign, its main focus remains on depicting the apocalyptic consequences of global warming, rooted in both image and text, with the image being the primary source of cognitive impact.

Thus, it can be argued that the primary intent of the PSA is to depict and raise awareness of the devastating outcomes that our world may face as a result of global warming. Subsequently, based on the textual mode, the secondary focus of the "Time Travel" campaign is to heighten potential clients' interest in the services provided by the Time Travel Agency.

The external cultural dimension reflected in the poster shapes both visual design and the message of this PSA. In cultures with strong external control, such as in parts of Eastern Europe, there is a prevalent belief that external forces, such as fate, nature, or societal structures, have a significant influence over individual and collective outcomes (Cox 2006; Vindry & Gervais 2019)

This PSA echoes that cultural perspective by presenting an apocalyptic future world, suggesting that if action is not taken soon, the severe repercussions of global warming will be unavoidable. The imagery of the submerged historic bridge serves as a powerful symbol of how these external, uncontrollable forces, represented by climate change, could devastate even the most iconic and enduring human achievements.

The use of London Bridge as a cultural symbol is also important to the reception of the PSA's campaign, especially in regions where this landmark is widely recognized and holds significance. By showing London Bridge partially submerged by rising waters, the "Time Travel" poster evokes a strong emotional response, highlighting the severity of the prospective environmental state.

6. Discussion

The above analyses demonstrate how pictorial and textual modalities work together to create powerful PSAs that raise awareness about global warming. This section will discuss how multimodal communication enhances the impact of environmental messages. The use of multimodal communication, where visual elements often create an emotional charge and textual elements provide context, makes PSAs more effective (Kövecses 2008; Semino 2008; Evans 2014). Cognitive metaphors provide a base for translating complex environmental issues into more understandable and relatable ideas (Forceville 2008), helping audiences connect emotionally and intellectually with the PSA's intended environmental message. For instance, in the "Evolution" campaign, the pictorial metaphor of human degeneration works closely with the cognitive concept of GLOBAL WARMING IS HUMAN DEVOLUTION to deepen the impact of the PSA.

Another finding from the analysis is that pictorial metaphors in PSAs significantly enhance their primary purpose of raising awareness. Visual metaphors play a crucial role in creating emotionally charged narratives (Yu 2009; Forceville 1994), like the polar bear struggling to breathe in the "#2CTROP" campaign or Bigfoot in the "Climate League" PSA. The visual representations tap into cultural symbols or human experiences, making the messages more impactful. The "Global Warming–WWF" PSA, for instance, uses the familiar image of penguins and urban homeless people to evoke a powerful connection between environmental destruction and human suffering, drawing attention to the urgency of climate change in a relatable and thought-provoking way. By using visuals to create an emotional appeal, these PSAs ensure their messages resonate on a deeper level.

Cultural factors also play a key role in how audiences interpret and respond to these multimodal metaphors. Using Trompenaars' cultural dimensions framework, the analysis shows that PSAs like "Global Warming–WWF" appeal to individualistic cultures by emphasizing personal responsibility

in fighting climate change. In contrast, the "#2CTROP" campaign from France, with its emotionally charged portrayal of the polar bear, appeals to communitarian cultures by stressing collective action and responsibility. By aligning metaphors with the values of their target audiences, these campaigns increase their overall effectiveness.

While cultural frameworks like Trompenaars' dimensions provide valuable insights into broad cultural tendencies (Koc 2020), they have also been subject to debate regarding their applicability to increasingly dynamic and interconnected societies. Rather than viewing cultural categories as fixed, recent scholarship emphasizes their evolving nature, influenced by globalization and cross-cultural interactions (Kittler et al. 2011). However, despite these discussions, such models remain useful for identifying patterns of communication and cultural orientation, particularly when applied with an understanding of their adaptability. In the current study, Trompenaars' framework is utilized as a lens to explore cultural influences on metaphor interpretation, acknowledging that cultural dimensions interact with broader social, historical, and contextual factors.

By integrating multimodal elements and considering cultural specificity, the PSAs analyzed here exemplify how communication strategies can balance universal environmental themes with localized messaging. This approach not only strengthens the emotional and intellectual engagement of audiences but also underscores the value of cultural sensitivity in global campaigns addressing climate change.

7. Conclusion

This study presented a cross-cultural and compositional analysis of multimodal metaphors used in PSAs related to global warming. By analyzing PSAs through the frameworks of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), pictorial metaphor classification (Forceville 2008), and Trompenaars' (1994, 2004) cultural dimensions, we examined how text and images interact to convey critical environmental messages. The multimodal approach revealed the significant role of metaphors in making crucial and complex issues like climate change accessible.

The analysis demonstrated that while the pictorial metaphors in PSAs are essential in creating emotional appeal, cultural context also heavily influences the crafting of these messages. The use of cultural dimensions provided insight into the variations in communication strategies, showing how different cultural values shape the way global warming messages are conveyed.

While the findings offer insights into how multimodal metaphors function in climate-related PSAs, future research could expand on these frameworks to analyze a wider variety of social issues across diverse cultural contexts. By delving deeper into the interconnections between cognitive, visual, and cultural dimensions, further studies could enhance our understanding of how PSAs can be designed to engage global audiences more effectively in addressing urgent environmental and social challenges.

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Quantifying brand narratives in content marketing: Linguistic insights from Nike and Coca-Cola

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Abstract: This study investigates how linguistic patterns represent brand narratives within content marketing, focusing on Nike and Coca-Cola as examples. Through the analysis of 40 brand narratives from each brand, three core aspects are analysed, namely, how plot staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension emerge in these narratives and whether predictable linguistic patterns are used. The analysis with Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22) shows that Nike emphasises action and athletic challenges, incorporating narrative features like staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, focuses more on emotional appeal and brand heritage, while drawing on cognitive tension. However, both brands follow mostly predictable linguistic patterns that align with traditional storytelling structures. The study provides strategic insights for marketers on using language to create engaging, coherent brand stories that resonate emotionally with audiences.

Keywords: Brand storytelling, brand narratives, content marketing, linguistic patterns, metaphors, narrative arc, LIWC-22, Nike, Coca-Cola

1. Introduction

Brand stories are essential in marketing as they capture a brand's essence, values, and purpose while simultaneously creating brand awareness and resonance with the target audience (Moin 2020; Mills & John 2021). The complex social and psychological processes involved in storytelling have interested scholars for decades (Boyd et al. 2020; Scheibe & Barrett 2017; von Fircks 2023). To fully understand this complexity, it is necessary to examine how language serves as a tool through which brand narratives are represented within content marketing.

Language serves as the primary medium through which stories are created and conveyed, making it a fundamental tool in storytelling (Brand 2022). For example, the choice and arrangement of words define how stories unfold, develop characters and settings, and progress plots, forming the building blocks of narrative structures (Endeavour Speech LLP 2024; Feccomandi 2024).

Despite the extensive study of brand storytelling from various angles (Mills 2023; Lopes & Casais 2022; Park et al. 2021), the strategic use of language remains largely unexplored. In response, this paper emphasises the role of linguistic patterns in brand narratives, contributing to the existing body of research from an organisational perspective (see Aimé 2021; Mills & John 2021; Park et al. 2021).

It is proposed in this study that specific linguistic patterns, characterised by staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension, are evident in a brand's narrative arc and play a fundamental role in influencing how brand narratives are constructed. These patterns include linguistic features such as articles, prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, and cognitive processing words, which contribute to the coherence and flow of a narrative. In brand storytelling, these linguistic patterns help establish staging (introducing characters, settings, and relationships), plot progression (advancing the storyline through actions and challenges), and cognitive tension (building emotional engagement through conflict and resolution) (Boyd et al. 2020; Brown & Tu 2020).

Identifying recurring linguistic patterns provides more insight into how language is strategically used to influence consumer perception, maintain brand identity, and elicit emotional engagement. All of these are critical requirements for effective brand communication. Furthermore, understanding how linguistic patterns structure brand narratives is essential because language is not just a medium of communication but a strategic tool for branding (see Morais & Lerman 2019). If brand narratives consistently follow predictable linguistic patterns, content marketers can use these insights to enhance

consumer engagement and brand recall. Furthermore, identifying the role of linguistic patterns in staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension provides brands with a framework for creating engaging and emotionally resonant brand stories that align with their identity.

To investigate how linguistic patterns in brand narratives contribute to branding strategies that may strengthen brand identity and consumer engagement, Nike and Coca-Cola's brand stories were purposively selected from their blogs. These two brands have been renowned for skilful brand storytelling in content marketing for decades making them exemplary cases of brand story representation (Arun 2023; MotionUp 2023). Nike, a well-known global company, specialises in high-quality athletic footwear and clothing (Childs & Jin 2017). On the other hand, the Coca-Cola brand has become synonymous with soft drinks and happy times (Khanna 2018). While these brands are widely acknowledged for their compelling narratives, little research has examined the specific linguistic patterns evident in their storytelling.

Consequently, this study aims to answer two research questions:

1. How do linguistic patterns, reflected in staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension, emerge in the narrative arcs of Nike and Coca-Cola's brand narratives?

2. How do their brand narratives follow predictable linguistic patterns?

Using LIWC-22 software for text analysis, this study quantifies the linguistic patterns evident in the brand narrative arcs of the Nike and Coca-Cola brands by adopting Boyd et al.'s (2020) narrative arc framework. Understanding the linguistic patterns in brand narratives is important because language serves as the foundation of storytelling (Brand 2022). Brands can use specific linguistic patterns to change consumer perceptions, encourage emotions, and reinforce brand identity. Identifying whether linguistic patterns emerge in brand narratives helps reveal the underlying process of brand storytelling and how language influences engagement (Boucher 2018; Fujii 2024).

Furthermore, exploring whether brand narratives follow predictable linguistic patterns has practical implications for content marketers. If linguistic structures in brand storytelling are predictable, marketers can strategically construct narratives that align with successful storytelling techniques to enhance consumer engagement. This study adds to existing research by examining how language operates within brand storytelling to enhance brand-consumer relationships. The results enhance our understanding of the strategic application of language in brand narratives, introducing a new element to the analysis of brand narrative structures.

The paper is structured as follows: a literature review first explains the narrative arc framework followed by a discussion of narratives in brand storytelling and content marketing. Thereafter, the method, results, and discussion are clarified. The paper ends with a conclusion.

2. Literature review

The review begins by outlining the narrative arc framework to understand narratives in brand storytelling and content marketing.

2.1 The narrative arc framework

Narrative theory serves as a useful lens for analysing linguistic patterns in brand narratives, integrating perspectives from literary studies, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, and cognitive science (Dawson & Mäkelä 2022). A key principle of narrative theory relevant to this study is that effective storytelling follows familiar structures, which are often evident in the linguistic patterns used (Falconi & Graber 2019). It thus provides valuable insights into how brand narratives are structured to convey messages to help audiences interpret and engage with the content (Mills & John 2021). Narrative

theory provides an important framework for understanding how brand narratives are constructed and provide insights into the linguistic patterns that make narratives compelling (Brown & Tu 2020). Central to this framework is the concept of the narrative arc, which structures a narrative into distinct phases, namely staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension to identify patterns in narrative progression across various texts (Boyd et al. 2020).

A narrative arc, also known as a "story arc" or "dramatic arc", provides the framework that defines a story (Brown & Tu 2020). While the plot consists of the individual events that make up a story, the narrative arc refers to the sequence and structure of these events (Boyd et al. 2020). Research indicates that a core lexical structure underlies written narratives (Alberhasky & Durkee 2024; Boyd et al. 2020). Linguistic patterns include particular language features (for example, the use of prepositions and articles for staging, pronouns and auxiliary verbs for plot progression, and emotionally charged words for cognitive tension) that together define the overall narrative structure (Solonchak & Pesina 2015).

The traditional narrative structures, such as Aristotle's dramatic principles, Freytag's pyramid, Campbell's hero's journey, and Vonnegut's plot wave, provide insights into how brand narratives are organised and perceived. All these frameworks emphasise the importance of a clear sequence, namely beginning, middle, and end, that engages and guides the audience (see Brown & Tu 2020). However, Boyd et al.'s (2020) recent adaptation of narrative theory extends these classical frameworks by explaining how particular linguistic patterns facilitate narrative progression and coherence within the narrative arc. This study adopts Boyd et al.'s (2020) framework to assess the linguistic patterns found in the brand narratives of Nike and Coca-Cola.

Boyd et al.'s (2020) narrative arc framework draws from Freytag's five-phase pyramid (Ciğerci & Yıldırım 2023), which was adopted to analyse Nike and Coca-Cola's narrative structures. Table 1 contrasts Freytag's pyramid with Boyd et al.'s framework.

Table 1. Freytag's five-phase pyramid and Boyd et al.'s narrative arc framework

Freytag's five-phase pyramid (Ciğerci & Yıldırım 2023)	**Boyd et al.'s narrative arc framework (Boyd et al. 2020)**
Exposition: Introduces the characters, setting, and context.	**Staging:** Narrators set the stage by introducing characters, locations, and relationships.
Rising action: This develops the conflict and builds tension.	**Plot progression:** The story advances as the protagonist faces challenges.
Climax: Features the main event or turning point.	**Cognitive tension:** Characters actively work through issues, often peaking in the middle-to-late parts of the story.
Return (fall): Resolves the aftermath of the climax.	
Denouement (resolution): Ties up loose ends and brings the story to a close.	

Both frameworks structure narratives similarly but use different terminology and focus areas.

Boyd et al.'s (2020) narrative arc framework, summarised in Table 1, outlines the progression of a narrative in different phases, from setting the stage, advancing the plot, to resolving tension. Distinct linguistic patterns are present in each phase, as follows:

Staging: The introduction of characters, locations, and relationships is marked by frequent use of prepositions (e.g., "in", "at") and articles ("the", "a"), which establish spatial and contextual clarity.

Plot progression: Narratives advance through increased use of pronouns ("he", "they"), auxiliary verbs ("can", "must"), and conjunctions ("but", "however"), guiding the audience through events.

Cognitive tension: Emotional depth and narrative complexity are signalled by the presence of cognitive processing words ("realise", "struggle") and emotionally charged terms ("challenge", "overcome"), creating audience engagement.

These phases are integral to storytelling and influences how audiences process and connect with narratives. Staging provides essential context, linking the brand to its identity and values. Plot progression ensures a logical, engaging flow, reinforcing key brand messages. Cognitive tension introduces emotional intensity, making brand narratives more memorable and impactful (Boyd et al. 2020).

It is argued in this paper that when strategically applied in brand storytelling, these linguistic patterns can contribute to brand perception and identity. In addition, they can also build stronger audience-brand relationships and long-term brand loyalty (Mills & John 2021).

2.2 Brand narratives in storytelling

To contextualise this approach, it is useful to consider existing research on brand narratives and language use.

Branding is a strategic process that involves creating a distinct identity and emotional connection with consumers. Effective branding helps brands to differentiate themselves in competitive markets and enhance customer loyalty (Dominique-Ferreira et al. 2022). A key element of branding is storytelling, where brands construct narratives that align with their identity and values to resonate with audiences (Dias & Cavalheiro 2022). Brand identity refers to the unique combination of visual, verbal, and emotional elements that define a brand and distinguish it from competitors. More than just aesthetics, brand identity determines how consumers perceive, recognise, and emotionally connect with a brand (Kapferer 2012). In the context of brand narratives in storytelling, linguistic patterns reinforce brand identity by ensuring consistent messaging, evoking specific emotions, and aligning narratives with brand values (Escalas 2004). Nike and Coca-Cola use brand narratives to reinforce their identity and enhance consumer engagement through convincing storytelling. In this regard, Nike's inspirational storytelling consistently emphasises determination and empowerment, while Coca-Cola's brand identity is tied to happiness, nostalgia, and shared experiences.

It is well documented in the literature that storytelling is important in providing meaning (Moin 2020; Aimé 2021) and distinguishing a brand from other brands (Dominique-Ferreira et al. 2022). However, even today scholars use the term "narrative" interchangeably with "story" (Rosenthal 2023).

A brand story represents the brand's essence and remains consistent, while its narratives may vary in how events are portrayed (McCall et al. 2019). Brand narratives incorporate elements such as characters, settings, and plots to engage audiences, making them memorable and reinforcing brand identity (Khanna 2018; Loyal 2023). Thus, while a brand story is singular, narratives are the multiple ways that stories can be told, adapted to different contexts and audiences (Dominique-Ferreira et al. 2022) and enhancing brand recognition and emotional resonance with consumers (Apenkro 2023).

Brand storytelling thus entails creating narratives to convey, share, and build knowledge (Serrat 2017). In content marketing, brand storytelling is defined as "the art of crafting narratives that resonate with audiences on an emotional level, weaving together a brand's values, mission, and personality into a cohesive and compelling story" (Jiroch 2024). As put forward by Freytag in 1863, narratives include story components such as characters, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution to help the target audience remember them. Brand storytelling in content marketing thus addresses the creative aspect of developing narratives that captivate and inspire the target audience (Serrat 2017). These narrative components are critical to keeping the audience engaged and emotionally connected, both of which are important goals of content marketing (Pulizzi & Piper 2023; Rose 2021).

Various perspectives exist in the literature regarding the essential components of a brand story (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote 2016; Houghton 2023). However, it is generally agreed that a brand story should include a plot, a character, and a purpose, such as a message that resonates with the target audience to enhance brand awareness (Mills & John 2021). Mills and John's (2021) explanation of a brand story as a strategic narrative that includes plot and character to represent the brand meaningfully to consumers is extended in this study to apply to brand storytelling in content marketing. Brand storytelling thus uses narrative structures and techniques to engage and meaningfully promote brands to stakeholders (Mills 2023).

It is acknowledged that brand stories often incorporate archetypes – character types or roles that brands use to connect with their audience on a deeper emotional level (Merlo et al. 2023), but which are not the focus of this study. Rather, this study quantifies the linguistic patterns represented in the narrative arcs of Nike and Coca-Cola's brand narratives as reflected in their blog posts within their content marketing strategies.

2.3 Brand narratives in content marketing

Brand storytelling in content marketing is used as a strategic tool for connecting with the target audience on an emotional level through resonant stories (Boucher 2018). Content marketing is a non-promotional strategic approach that uses brand narratives to engage the target audience and enhance long-term brand loyalty (Pulizzi & Piper 2023). Content marketers create and distribute brand narratives with content such as videos, podcasts, whitepapers, blog posts, images, eBooks, and infographics through owned media channels (e.g., websites, blogs, e-mail lists) (Beard et al. 2021; Ho et al. 2020). This content is also shared on social media to generate earned media, including word-of-mouth, customer reviews, media coverage, and social media shares. Furthermore, brand content is promoted through paid media channels such as print and online banner advertisements, sponsored social media posts, pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns, and influencer partnerships (Beard et al. 2021; Ho et al. 2020). Using owned media is crucial for maintaining audience engagement and emotional connection, which are key goals of content marketing (Lou & Xie 2020).

There is still some debate about whether content marketing and brand storytelling are synonymous (Beavon 2019). However, this study draws from marketing practitioners' perspectives that view brand storytelling as the foundation of content marketing (Rose 2021; Shiao 2019). Brand stories within content marketing convey narratives that define a brand's identity and justify the target audience's interest (Fujii 2024). Such stories are reflected in the brand content created to ensure engaging brand experiences (Rose 2021; Lou & Xie 2020) and to emphasise the brand's values and principles (Shiao 2019).

Importantly, this study views brand storytelling not only as a tactical tool (Moin 2020), but also as a strategic tool for using narrative structures to effectively represent a brand story. This approach aligns with Mills and John's (2021) argument that brand storytelling should be analysed not only for its functional aspects but also for its intrinsic value and impact.

This study integrates computational linguistic analysis with narrative theory to examine how Nike and Coca-Cola use linguistic patterns to construct their brand narratives. Brand storytelling,

particularly in content marketing, relies on narrative techniques to maintain brand identity and build long-term audience relationships (Mills & John 2021). The connection between linguistic patterns and narrative theory is important because it highlights how brands strategically use their messaging to reinforce meaning, engagement, and brand identity over time. This study builds on previous research by quantifying linguistic patterns in brand narratives to examine how Nike and Coca-Cola create their narrative arcs, providing insights into the linguistic foundations of strategic brand storytelling.

3. Method

Building on these insights, this study adopts a quantitative textual analysis approach using a corpus of brand stories rather than a corpus-linguistic methodology. Corpus linguistics often involves computational techniques for analysing large-scale language patterns. However, this study focuses on measuring narrativity within brand storytelling using LIWC-22, a powerful software application for analysing word usage in text (Boyd et al. 2022). This tool was selected for the computational linguistic analysis to quantify linguistic markers associated with narrative structures in the brand corpus. As such, this study did not use corpus-linguistic techniques such as concordance analysis or dependency parsing. While LIWC-22 does not capture syntax or polysemy, it offers a reliable way to measure psychological and linguistic cues across a large dataset. Importantly, the tool was not used to analyse sentence meaning but to detect patterns in word category usage that statistically align with narrative structures.

An interpretivist worldview was adopted, acknowledging that the shared meanings and cultural contexts in which narratives are created affect their understanding and communication (Shenhav 2015). The interpretivist worldview suggests that social constructs such as language, awareness, shared meanings, and tools mediate the reality of brand narratives (Croucher & Cronn-Mills 2019).

Although this study applies a quantitative linguistic analysis, it aligns with an interpretivist perspective by acknowledging that language is context-dependent and socially constructed. While LIWC-22 identifies linguistic patterns through computational analysis, these patterns gain meaning only when interpreted within the broader context of narrative theory and branding strategies. Similar to prior studies that have integrated LIWC-22 into interpretivist research (Alberhasky & Durkee 2024; Mandelbaum & Fuller 2021), this study used the software as a tool to uncover textual features. However, the researcher's analytical perspective remained central to understanding how these linguistic patterns contribute to brand storytelling.

The study draws on two publicly available corpora of brand stories, namely Coca-Cola (24,482 words) and Nike (29,064 words). The brands' stories were selected manually and purposively from their blogs and converted into Word document format (docx) for analysis. Stories had to be published between 2021 and 2023 to ensure relevance today and have a minimum word count of 250 to allow for a reliable analysis.

For LIWC-22 to effectively analyse the narrative arc, a substantial amount of text was needed. Generally, LIWC-22 performs best with a minimum of 250 words to ensure reliable analysis (Boyd et al. 2022). Previous research indicates that selecting a total of 40 brand stories per brand for this study was sufficient to establish linguistic patterns in their narrative arcs and yield more reliable results (Kane & van Swol 2022). The sample size of this study facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the narratives associated with each brand, while also ensuring more reliable and consistent patterns. By selecting 40 stories per brand, a diverse representation of the brands' narratives could be analysed. The process of data cleaning, which involved the removal of incorrectly formatted text and potential duplicates, significantly improved data quality (Pereira et al. 2024).

The built-in LIWC-22 narrative arc dictionary was used, which categorises linguistic patterns associated with different narrative phases. Specifically, it measured staging (high use of articles, prepositions), plot progression (increased use of auxiliary verbs, pronouns), and cognitive tension

(elevated presence of cognitive processing and emotional words). While the software effectively quantified these lexical markers, it did not measure syntactic structures, verb tense shifts, or inflectional morphology.

While it is acknowledged that syntactic structures are fundamental to narrative meaning, their analysis requires syntactic parsing tools that go beyond LIWC-22's lexical categorisation approach. Thus, while Boyd et al.'s (2020) approach effectively captures lexical markers of narrative progression, it does not account for syntactic variation (see the study's limitations in the conclusion section).

LIWC-22 software evaluates more than 100 textual dimensions, all of which have been rigorously validated and acknowledged by esteemed academics for their reliability. More than 20,000 scientific articles have referenced the software, indicating its accuracy and reliability (Boyd et al. 2022). Additionally, the algorithms and dictionaries of LIWC-22 have undergone continuous refinement and validation through empirical research, guaranteeing that the textual analysis is comprehensive and precise (see Tausczik & Pennebaker 2010; Bantum & Owen 2009; Koutsoumpis et al. 2022). Thorough data cleaning and a diverse sample also improved the reliability of the results. Consequently, the linguistic patterns identified in the narrative arcs were statistically significant and representative of contemporary linguistic trends.

The researcher's institution granted ethics approval for the use of secondary data on 23 June 2023, and the study was therefore implemented in accordance with ethical requirements.

4. Results

The analysis yielded several noteworthy linguistic patterns, which are detailed below. The results are reported first for the Nike brand stories, followed by those for Coca-Cola. The graphs and metrics illustrate how closely each brand's text adheres to a typical narrative structure, providing insights into the brands' linguistic patterns (Boyd et al. 2020).

The narrativity scores are categorised into overall narrativity, staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension. The scores reflect the degree of alignment of a text with standard narrative structures. Narrativity scores generally range from –100 to +100. A narrativity score of 100 indicates that the narrative structure of the text aligns perfectly with the ideal narrative framework. A text with a score of –100 exhibits a narrative structure that is entirely contrary to the normative framework. Narrativity represents the mean scores across three dimensions: staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension (Boyd et al. 2020; Blackburn 2015).

The narrativity score is a composite measure reflecting the extent to which a text follows a traditional narrative arc. A higher score indicates a well-structured narrative with clear staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension, while a lower score suggests a deviation from conventional storytelling structures. These scores help quantify the degree to which Nike and Coca-Cola's brand narratives align with established storytelling frameworks (Boyd et al. 2020; Blackburn 2015).

4.1 Nike brand stories

Table 2 depicts the narrativity scores of the 40 brand stories in the Nike corpus.

Table 2. Narrativity scores of the 40 brand stories in the Nike corpus

Filename	Word Count	Narrativity Overall	Narrativity Staging	Narrativity PlotProg	Narrativity CogTension
Nike 1.docx	388	35.19	65.83	8.69	31.04
Nike 2.docx	343	–18.69	11.91	5.15	–73.12
Nike 3.docx	345	–6.11	–11.91	44.09	–50.52
Nike 4.docx	981	27.31	54.67	38.22	–10.97
Nike 5.docx	425	21.68	51.32	47.1	–33.37
Nike 6.docx	312	–9.22	21.4	–4.91	–4.14
Nike 7.docx	953	3.95	96.32	–29.41	–55.06
Nike 8.docx	1112	59.02	85.4	62.07	29.59
Nike 9.docx	965	35.99	71.19	9.79	26.99
Nike 10.docx	994	13.99	–23.6	15.5	50.08
Nike 11.docx	1026	–7	–29.13	11.14	–3.02
Nike 12.docx	871	61.33	44.94	58.77	80.29
Nike 13.docx	926	15.42	63.78	–1.18	–16.35
Nike 14.docx	1300	26.76	88.77	31.11	–39.62
Nike 15.docx	1075	73.55	97.32	84.07	39.24
Nike 16.docx	453	34.06	86.59	25.81	–10.22
Nike 17.docx	390	30.76	66.12	13.91	12.25
Nike 18.docx	857	58.4	50.25	56.9	68.04
Nike 19.docx	1815	58.46	80.51	51.19	43.7
Nike 20.docx	453	34.06	86.59	25.81	–10.22
Nike 21.docx	422	28.62	61.76	58.61	–34.49
Nike 22.docx	534	–5.44	49.82	–7.6	–58.53
Nike 23.docx	464	6.83	37.65	–9.97	–7.21
Nike 24.docx	468	1.12	50.89	–22.06	–25.47
Nike 25.docx	389	–17.38	35.12	–40.61	–46.66
Nike 26.docx	503	22.48	45.6	2.48	19.37
Nike 27.docx	547	34.82	80.64	20.88	2.95
Nike 28.docx	227	38.59	91.43	24.44	–0.1
Nike 29.docx	600	–38.76	–51.77	–55.17	–9.33
Nike 30.docx	465	–21.4	5.44	–53.1	–16.54
Nike 31.docx	484	–43.44	–36.03	–44.19	–50.09
Nike 32.docx	506	51.01	69.63	35.31	48.1

Nike 33.docx	573	–34.17	–11.53	–21.62	–69.35
Nike 34.docx	1338	31.59	79.15	38.39	–22.78
Nike 35.docx	397	35.3	71.4	3.47	31.03
Nike 36.docx	1670	32	69.44	37.82	–11.25
Nike 37.docx	840	47.31	67.36	37.63	36.95
Nike 38.docx	222	–0.1	–33.83	2.52	31.02
Nike 39.docx	1306	–4.53	58.19	–15.9	–55.86
Nike 40.docx	936	37.99	31.71	33.46	48.8

The narrativity scores are further explained below.

Overall narrativity in Nike brand stories

Scores for overall narrativity range from –43.44 to 73.55. Among Nike's brand stories, 25 have positive narrativity scores, aligning closely with traditional storytelling elements that resonate well with audiences. These narratives effectively integrate staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension to create engaging and coherent narratives. On the other hand, 15 stories have negative overall narrativity scores, indicating narratives that deviate significantly from traditional norms.

The results highlight Nike's diverse storytelling strategies, where some narratives surpass traditional narrative structures, such as staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension, while others indicate innovative approaches that challenge conventional storytelling norms.

Staging in the Nike brand stories

Scores across Nike's stories ranged widely from –51.77 to 97.32, indicating variability in the establishment and maintenance of narrative context. Among these, 25 stories received positive staging scores and 15 negative scores, demonstrating a strong ability to set up and sustain narrative context effectively throughout the story. The negative scores indicate a less conventional approach where the initial scene setup may be minimal or the intensity poorly sustained throughout the narrative.

Plot progression in Nike brand stories

Plot progression reflects how narratives develop over time, from introducing actions to unfolding them using pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and other function words (Boyd et al. 2020). Scores ranged from –55.17 to 84.07, showcasing diverse approaches to how Nike stories progress from action initiation to resolution. Among these, 27 stories received positive plot progression scores, demonstrating a strong ability to develop and unfold actions effectively throughout the narrative. These stories maintain a cohesive and engaging progression from start to finish. On the other hand, 13 stories received negative plot progression scores, indicating challenges in effectively developing and unfolding actions, potentially resulting in disjointed or less engaging plot development.

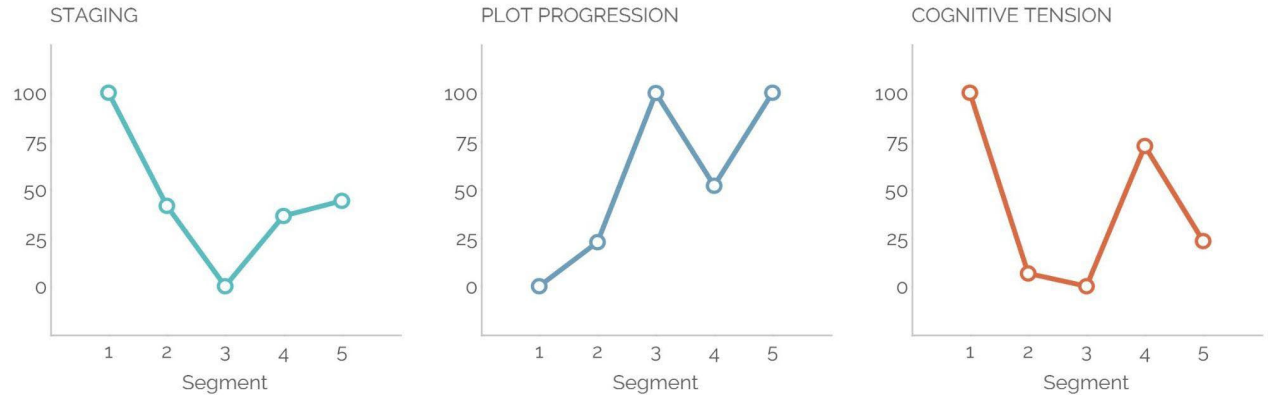
Cognitive tension in Nike brand stories

Cognitive tension measures the rise and fall of psychological conflict or uncertainty within the narrative (Boyd et al. 2020). Scores spanned from –73.12 to 80.29, showing significant variability in how tension was built and resolved across Nike's brand stories using cognitive processing of words. Among these, 24 stories received positive cognitive tension scores, demonstrating a strong ability to create and sustain psychological tension throughout the narrative, enhancing emotional depth and audience engagement. In contrast, 16 stories received negative cognitive tension scores, indicating a

lack of building psychological conflict or uncertainty effectively.

Figure 2 below reflects the story shapes among five segments in terms of the overall narrativity of staging, plot progression and cognitive tension.

Figure 2. The story shapes among five segments in terms of the overall narrativity of staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension



The figure shows the LIWC-22 narrativity plot for 40 Nike brand stories and illustrates the average narrative development across 40 Nike brand stories using LIWC-22 narrativity scores. Staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension are mapped across five evenly divided segments of each story. On the x-axis, the timeline of the stories divides into five segments, each representing 20% of the entire narrative. The y-axis shows narrativity scores, which range from –100 to +100, indicating how closely each segment aligns with language typically found in traditional storytelling.

The curves show how these linguistic features evolve throughout the course of the narratives when averaged across all 40 stories. Nike brand stories often start with a stronger focus on staging in Segment 1, where the scene is set and context is established through frequent use of prepositions and articles. In Segments 2 and 3, the narrative typically starts gaining traction. For example, the plot becomes more complicated and emotional intensity increases to indicate a shift from initial setup to active development. Segment 4 often reflects the most tension, caused by internal conflict or a struggle that defines the emotional progression of the story. The tension gradually decreases in Segment 5 as the story progresses towards conclusion, providing closure while emphasising the emotional importance of previous events.

Nike thus tends to focus on conflict and personal struggle at the heart of its brand stories which is especially clear in Nike's *Never Done Skateboard* story, which states:

> Ah, twenty years of Nike SB. What started off as a big brand on the outskirts of an insular movement turned into a welcome champion of the sport, pushing the culture and footwear innovation forwards like only Nike can. But the SB story is full of twists, turns, sends and bails—all leading to where we, and skateboarding, are today. (Nike 2022a)

This emphasis on hardship and eventual acceptance helps form Nike's identity as a brand that thrives on disruption. Another example is the *Never Done Writing Your Future*, which presents young immigrants in Italy using sport as a form of resistance and hope:

> According to Italian law, children of migrants can't play organised sport at all as they don't have a right to citizenship from birth. Foreigners in their own country, they fought together as one Tam Tam team for a chance to compete, and like Giannis, they showed their worth and never settled to finally get recognised. (Nike 2023)

In both examples, Nike used struggle and transformation as key narrative drivers.

4.2 Coca-Cola brand stories

Table 3 depicts the narrativity scores of the 40 brand stories in the Coca-Cola corpus in terms of overall narrativity, staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension.

Table 3. Narrativity scores of the 40 brand stories in the corpus

Filename	**Word Count**	**Narrativity Overall**	**Narrativity Staging**	**Narrativity PlotProg**	**Narrativity CogTension**
Coca-Cola 1.docx	888	54.79	79.94	47.09	37.33
Coca-Cola 2.docx	421	22.89	–31.95	90.76	9.85
Coca-Cola 3.docx	313	28.18	–16.44	32.94	68.03
Coca-Cola 4.docx	790	11.69	–9.76	–15.55	60.39
Coca-Cola 5.docx	530	35.85	5.46	59.77	42.32
Coca-Cola 6.docx	601	57.75	89.54	24.61	59.1
Coca-Cola 7.docx	277	26.38	50.42	44.29	–15.56
Coca-Cola 8.docx	251	20.22	15.54	27.69	17.43
Coca-Cola 9.docx	541	42.5	73.68	53.95	–0.13
Coca-Cola 10.docx	615	58.74	93.89	67.43	14.9
Coca-Cola 11.docx	648	17.81	–36.22	61.19	28.47
Coca-Cola 12.docx	466	–20.98	–17.82	17.68	–62.79
Coca-Cola 13.docx	391	–9.93	47.46	–29.69	–47.55
Coca-Cola 14.docx	778	9.81	56.2	19.8	–46.57
Coca-Cola 15.docx	645	40.31	6.04	38.42	76.45
Coca-Cola 16.docx	484	21.89	52.82	0.21	12.64
Coca-Cola 17.docx	404	49.05	69.42	49.34	28.4
Coca-Cola 18.docx	467	11.19	–37.08	38.88	31.77
Coca-Cola 19.docx	536	25.76	–39.23	48.7	67.82
Coca-Cola 20.docx	549	16.29	54.8	–0.12	–5.79
Coca-Cola 21.docx	322	–11.74	–12.9	19.46	–41.77
Coca-Cola 22.docx	389	63.76	44.6	63.01	83.67
Coca-Cola 23.docx	575	24.92	38.66	15.55	20.53
Coca-Cola 24.docx	584	–12.09	19.48	–32.7	–23.04
Coca-Cola 25.docx	580	50.46	36.22	56.2	58.95
Coca-Cola 26.docx	402	41.88	18.57	56.01	51.06
Coca-Cola 27.docx	581	–12.98	–19.43	–18.78	–0.75

Coca-Cola 28.docx	508	–23.05	–22.42	–27.01	–19.72
Coca-Cola 29.docx	735	61.76	50.94	61.66	72.67
Coca-Cola 30.docx	443	–40.09	–17.12	–38.86	–64.28
Coca-Cola 31.docx	779	9.68	–9.14	–41.21	79.4
Coca-Cola 32.docx	643	36.47	71.75	58.5	–20.84
Coca-Cola 33.docx	396	15.22	25.25	–11.8	32.2
Coca-Cola 34.docx	479	23.82	–5.51	46.87	30.12
Coca-Cola 35.docx	672	59.54	97.07	52.83	28.71
Coca-Cola 36.docx	621	6.58	16.74	48.85	–45.85
Coca-Cola 37.docx	493	47.05	68.91	38.23	34
Coca-Cola 38.docx	506	14.7	49.83	19.31	–25.05
Coca-Cola 39.docx	389	37.53	30.96	43.63	38
Coca-Cola 40.docx	791	25.94	37.41	49.63	–9.23

The narrativity scores are further explained below.

Overall narrativity in Coca-Cola brand stories

Scores ranged from –40.09 to 63.76 across Coca-Cola's brand stories. A total of 21 stories exhibited positive overall narrativity scores, aligning closely with traditional storytelling elements that resonate well with audiences. These narratives effectively integrate staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension to create engaging and coherent narratives. On the contrary, 19 stories displayed negative overall narrativity scores, showcasing narratives that deviate notably from traditional norms that may appeal to different audience preferences.

Coca-Cola's brand stories thus demonstrate a range of overall narrativity scores, with some narratives closely following traditional storytelling elements while others explore different approaches.

Staging in the Coca-Cola brand stories

Scores across Coca-Cola's stories ranged widely from –39.23 to 97.07, indicating variability in the establishment and maintenance of narrative context. Among these, 22 stories received positive staging scores, demonstrating a strong ability to set up and sustain narrative context effectively throughout the story. These narratives skilfully establish and maintain the scene's relevance and intensity from start to finish. In contrast, 18 of the stories received negative staging scores, indicating that all stories at least maintained a moderate level of narrative context.

Plot progression in Coca-Cola brand stories

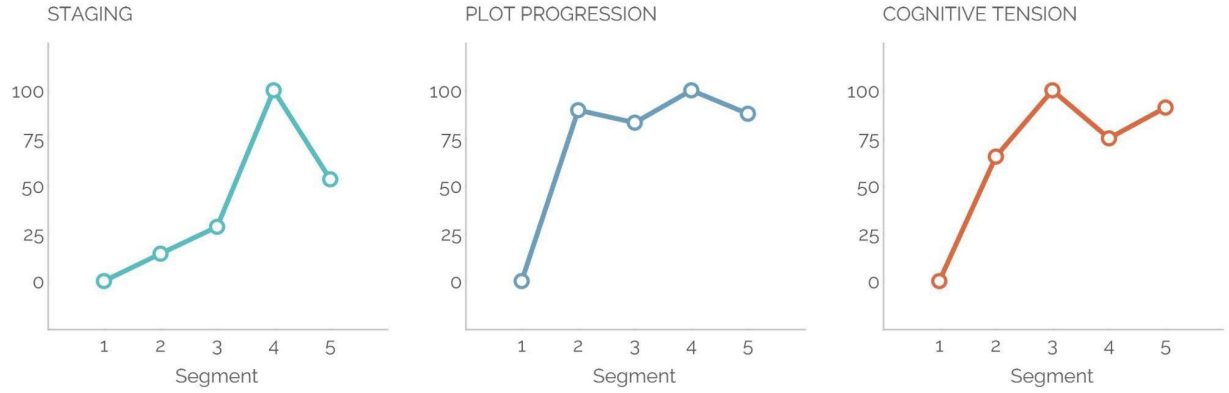
Scores ranged from –41.21 to 90.76, showcasing diverse approaches to how Coca-Cola's stories progress from action initiation to resolution. Among these, 26 stories received positive plot progression scores, demonstrating a strong ability to develop and unfold actions effectively throughout the narrative. These stories maintain a cohesive and engaging progression from start to finish. On the other hand, 14 stories received negative plot progression scores, indicating challenges in effectively developing and unfolding actions, potentially resulting in fragmented plot development.

Cognitive tension in Coca-Cola brand stories

Scores spanned from –64.28 to 83.67, showing significant variability in how tension was built and resolved across Coca-Cola's brand stories using cognitive processing of words. Among these, 21 stories received positive cognitive tension scores, demonstrating an ability to create and sustain psychological tension throughout the narrative, enhancing emotional depth and audience engagement. In contrast, 19 stories received negative cognitive tension scores, indicating a lack of effectively building psychological conflict or uncertainty.

Figure 4 reflects the story shapes among five segments in terms of overall narrativity of staging, plot progression and cognitive tension.

Figure 4. The story shapes among five segments in terms of the overall narrativity of staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension



The figure shows the LIWC-22 narrativity plot for 40 Coca-Cola brand stories. The x-axis divides each story into five equal segments of 20% length, while the y-axis reflects narrativity scores ranging from –100 to +100, reflecting the degree to which each segment aligns with traditional storytelling frameworks. The plotted curve represents the average path across all stories, illustrating how narrativity unfolds in terms of staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension.

Coca-Cola narratives generally start with a focus on staging in Segment 1, where context is established using prepositions and articles to anchor the brand message. In Segments 2 and 3, narrative momentum heightens consistently, with enhanced plot progression and emotional involvement signifying the shift from introductory context to developing narratives. Segment 4 frequently signifies the peak of cognitive tension, wherein instances of internal or emotional conflict arise. In Segment 5, the tension gradually declines as the narratives move towards resolution, providing closure while emphasising the emotional significance of the journey.

Thus, whereas Nike's brand storytelling often hinges on tension and conflict, Coca-Cola leans into emotional uplift and aspirational themes, often leaving these for the story's resolution. Coca-Cola consistently builds its brand around emotional uplift and aspirational themes. This is demonstrated in the *Coca-Cola Empowers Women in Foodservice Industry story:*

> What started in 1989 as a conversation about creating opportunities for women in the foodservice industry has emerged as a powerful movement for leadership development and, ultimately, gender equity. The Coca-Cola Company has actively supported the organization driving this work – the Women's Foodservice Forum (WFF) – for more than two decades. (The Coca-Cola Company 2023a)

This story does not rely on conflict; rather, it builds toward a hopeful resolution, centred on opportunity and empowerment. Another example is the *Topo Chico Plant Provides Free Water to its Monterrey Neighbors* story, which exemplifies how Coca-Cola aligns itself with community well-being and environmental stewardship:

> "For more than a century, Topo Chico has offered drinking water to the local community via a free, 24/7 tap outside its Monterrey plant…The 24/7 resource was highly utilized in 2022 when Monterrey suffered a historic drought... triggering a city-wide water shortage that hit low-income areas... especially hard…The infrastructure is huge, but education is the most important part of this project because it helps create a positive domino effect in school, at home and throughout the community," Mancinas said. "Together with our partners, we are fostering a multi-generational culture of conscious and responsible water users. That's why I truly believe Coca-Cola is helping to make a difference". (The Coca-Cola Company 2023b)

Instead of focusing on conflict, the story emphasises continuity, care, and a long-standing commitment to the community, with emotional emphasis added by the gratitude of local residents.

5. Discussion

The results highlight how specific linguistic patterns, particularly those related to plot progression and cognitive tension, may be strategically used in brand storytelling to enhance narrative engagement. These narrative structures are important in maintaining audience engagement and emotional connection (von Fircks 2023), which are key goals of content marketing (Fujii 2024; Pulizzi & Piper 2023).

Returning to research question 1, the Nike brand stories demonstrated a diverse range of narrativity scores, with an overall narrativity range from –43.44 to 73.55. This wide range indicates that Nike uses a mix of traditional and innovative storytelling techniques. Positive narrativity scores found in 25 out of 40 stories suggest that these narratives effectively integrate all three core elements: staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension. The ability to set up and sustain narrative context effectively is evident in the high staging scores for many stories, while plot progression and cognitive tension scores indicate how well the brand develops engaging narratives (Boyd et al. 2020).

To illustrate how these narrative phases function within brand communication, the Nike brand story provides a useful example. Staging provides essential context, linking the brand to its identity and values. In the line, "The young athletes at Atherton Gardens are forging a new future for themselves, and for sport" (Nike 2022b), Nike uses prepositions and articles to introduce characters and locations. The preposition "at" grounds the narrative in a specific location, while the article "the" specifies the defined group of characters, establishing them as the focal point of the story. The phrase "a future" suggests open-ended possibilities, inviting the audience to imagine what lies ahead and aligning with Nike's identity as a brand that supports ambition and transformation.

As the plot progresses, Nike uses pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions to deepen the narrative. For example: "Most of them live in the high-rise buildings that tower over them. This is their backyard … On the surface, this session is about skills, but it's also about breaking down barriers, so they can find strength in each other's differences on a level playing field" (Nike 2022b). This sequence shows logical flow and transformation. Pronouns like "them" create a sense of community and shared experience. Auxiliary verbs such as "is" clarify the state of being, while conjunctions like "but" introduce complexity, transitioning from a simple understanding of the session's purpose to a deeper exploration of social dynamics. This reinforces Nike's key brand message, namely growth through unity and overcoming adversity.

For cognitive tension, Nike frequently uses emotionally charged words. The line, "… told they were too weak for longer track races, let alone 26.2 miles of road" (Nike 2022c), evokes a sense of injustice and systemic underestimation. The word "weak" carries a negative connotation, suggesting fragility, while the phrase "let alone" highlights the overwhelming expectations placed upon the athletes. This juxtaposition raises questions about societal perceptions and the barriers athletes face in competitive sports, gaining sympathy for the athletes and positioning their eventual success as a triumph over adversity. In this way, Nike heightens emotional intensity, making the story more memorable and impactful (Boyd et al. 2020).

The Coca-Cola brand stories also showcased a wide range of narrativity scores, with an overall narrativity range of –40.09 to 63.76. A total of 21 stories showed positive overall narrativity scores, aligning closely with traditional storytelling elements that resonate well with audiences. These narratives effectively integrate staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension to create engaging and coherent narratives. On the other hand, 19 stories showed negative overall narrativity scores, indicating narratives that deviate from traditional norms that may appeal to different audience preferences. The results suggest that most of the Coca-Cola brand stories, like those of Nike, successfully use classical narrative structures to resonate with their audience. The use of cognitive tension appears to be particularly significant in Coca-Cola's narratives, aligning with the brand's historical emphasis on emotional and aspirational themes (Khanna 2018).

A similar application of these narrative phases can be seen in Coca-Cola's storytelling. Staging provides essential context, linking the brand to its identity and values. In the line, "Mixing cocktails or mocktails at home just got a lot simpler—and more delicious—with the launch of Simply Mixology" (The Coca-Cola Company 2023c), Coca-Cola uses prepositions and articles to establish a communal setting that positions Simply Mixology within consumers' everyday lives. The preposition "at home" clearly sets the scene of where these products will be enjoyed, reflecting the trend of socialising at home. The article "the" introduces Simply Mixology specifically, positioning it as a product aimed at enhancing the at-home experience. This contextual grounding aligns the brand with modern social traditions and everyday enjoyment.

As the plot progresses, Coca-Cola's stories use pronouns, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs to enhance narrative movement. For example: "On one hand, more people are enjoying making cocktails at home over bellying up to the bar. Simultaneously, a boom in booze-free movements like Dry January and sober curiosity have ignited the popularity of creative, premium-quality mocktails" (The Coca-Cola Company 2023c). The conjunctions "on one hand" and "simultaneously" create a sense of thematic and temporal progression, guiding the audience through similar behavioural shifts. The auxiliary verb "have" reinforces the continuity and momentum of these trends. These linguistic patterns not only connect narrative events but also reinforce Coca-Cola's positioning as attuned to evolving consumer preferences and lifestyle choices.

For cognitive tension, Coca-Cola's *Empowering Women in Foodservice* campaign introduces emotionally charged words that enhance the story's emotional depth. The phrase "no boundaries for growth, connection and inspiration" evokes a sense of boundless potential (The Coca-Cola Company 2023a), empowering women to overcome barriers and realise their aspirations. Words like "empower", "transform", and "impact" increase emotional intensity and position the brand as a catalyst for change. The statement "there are no boundaries for growth" underscores the campaign's aspirational tone and introduces tension by contrasting existing industry challenges with the ideal of boundless opportunities. This narrative structure makes the story more memorable and impactful (Boyd et al. 2020).

Returning to research question 2, both Nike and Coca-Cola narratives follow mostly predictable linguistic patterns that align with traditional storytelling structures (see Boyd et al. 2020). These predictable patterns emphasise the strategic use of language to create engaging brand stories. For example, Nike's use of emotionally charged words such as "challenge", "support", and "achieve" directly heightens cognitive tension and evokes powerful emotions related to athletic success. This

aligns with Nike's brand identity, which emphasises overcoming obstacles and striving for greatness (Childs & Jin 2017).

The high narrativity scores in the two brands' stories indicate a considered effort to structure narratives in ways that are familiar and appealing to audiences (Pulizzi & Piper 2023; Rose 2019). The strategic use of linguistic patterns, such as the use of pronouns to progress the plot or emotionally charged words to heighten cognitive tension, demonstrates the thoughtful effort by both brands to structure their narratives in a way that amplifies emotional impact. This strategic approach to language further reinforces the idea that predictable patterns can serve as a valuable tool in brand storytelling (Boyd et al. 2020).

The variation in narrativity scores suggests that not all brand stories follow a traditional narrative arc. This is significant because it indicates that brands may strategically deviate from conventional storytelling to adapt to different marketing objectives. For example, while Nike's action-driven narratives align with structured storytelling, Coca-Cola's emphasis on nostalgia and community may lead to less structured narrative structures. This insight helps marketers understand when and why certain linguistic patterns may differ from traditional narrativity frameworks.

Overall, the study emphasises the strategic role of linguistic patterns in brand storytelling, as effective narratives depend not just on content but on how it is conveyed (Mills 2023). Using specific linguistic patterns to stage the plot, progress actions, and build cognitive tension is important to creating resonant narratives (Mills & John 2021). Content marketers can use these insights to refine storytelling, ensuring narratives are well-structured and engaging to capture and sustain audience interest.

The results reinforce the idea that linguistic patterns in brand narratives extend beyond structural coherence to influence consumer engagement and brand identity. The use of cognitive tension in Coca-Cola narratives, for example, aligns with its emphasis on nostalgia and shared experiences, building brand identity through emotional engagement. Similarly, Nike's action-driven language supports its positioning as an aspirational brand, motivating consumers through compelling brand narratives.

Linguistic patterns can influence branding, as strategically used language can enhance a brand's success (Dias & Cavalheiro 2022). The findings also reinforce that staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension are essential for enhancing engagement in brand narratives. Staging helps establish context and brand identity, plot progression ensures narrative coherence, and cognitive tension creates emotional resonance. The high narrativity scores in Nike and Coca-Cola's stories suggest that successful brand storytelling relies on a combination of these patterns. Content marketers can use these insights to create brand narratives that not only inform but also evoke strong emotional connections with the target audience (Dominique-Ferreira et al. 2022).

Boyd et al.'s (2020) narrative arc framework proves effective for both analysing and representing brand narratives. This alignment with classical storytelling structures underlines the universality of storytelling principles, showing that linguistic patterns remain consistent across different contexts, including content marketing.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to branding research by providing empirical evidence of how linguistic patterns function within brand narratives. While storytelling is widely recognised as an important branding tool (Mills & John 2021; Park et al. 2021), few studies have measured the specific language patterns that support narrative structure. This study bridges that gap by applying a quantitative approach to identify linguistic markers that align with distinct phases of the narrative arc.

The results show that different types of words support different parts of a brand story. Function words like articles and prepositions are mostly used to set the scene. Pronouns and auxiliary verbs help move the story forward. Emotionally loaded words are used to add intensity and make the story more memorable. Understanding how different word types support specific narrative phases helps

brands create stories that are more engaging, emotionally resonant, and aligned with strategic messaging.

The study applies Boyd et al.'s (2020) framework to demonstrate how linguistic patterns are applied in real-world brand storytelling. This study thus provides empirical support for the framework's relevance in brand communication.

Another theoretical contribution is the role of **cognitive tension** in branding. While prior research acknowledges the importance of emotional engagement (Fujii 2024; Pulizzi & Piper 2023), this study quantifies **how and where** emotional tension is introduced within brand narratives. Instead of being uniformly present, cognitive tension appears at specific moments within Nike and Coca-Cola's stories, strategically placed to increase audience engagement.

This study adds to narrative theory by showing that brand stories often follow clear and repeated language patterns that match key parts of a narrative arc, like setting the scene, showing change, and creating emotional tension. The results thus show that narrative structure in branding can be seen and studied through language.

Lastly, this study fills a gap in the literature by connecting linguistic analysis with branding research. While past studies have explored brand storytelling through marketing and narrative theory, few have measured the specific language patterns that support brand narratives.

5.2 Practical implications

The study's results also present practical insights for content marketers. Tools like LIWC-22, which analyse linguistic patterns, can provide valuable insights into the emotional and cognitive effectiveness of brand stories.

The framework proposed by Boyd et al. (2020) provides content marketers with practical strategies for improving brand narratives. It highlights the importance of using descriptive language for staging, action verbs to advance the plot, and emotionally impactful words to create cognitive tension, thereby ensuring a coherent narrative structure.

Brands could use longer narratives to provide a richer context and more developed plot progression for more audience engagement. Shorter formats, such as social media posts or short video content, can still be effective if marketers strategically incorporate emotionally charged words that resonate with the audience.

This study's insights into plot progression and staging show that action-oriented language helps drive the narrative forward. Brands can use these same principles to create narratives that unfold well, ensuring that the audience stays engaged from start to finish.

With emotionally charged language, brands can heighten cognitive tension in their narratives, creating stories that are not just informative but emotionally compelling. Marketers can implement this by using words and phrases that evoke strong emotional responses.

6. Conclusion

Taken together, the insights gained from the study contribute to brand storytelling in content marketing by empirically validating the use of a narrative framework to represent brand narratives more effectively. Using Boyd et al.'s (2020) framework and linguistic analysis, the findings suggest that staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension enhance brand storytelling. The analysis of brand narrative structures of successful brands such as Nike and Coca-Cola demonstrate that linguistic patterns can be treated as practical tools to help increase audiences' emotional and cognitive engagement. Also, the ability to quantify and analyse narrativity provides content marketers with a valuable framework for evaluating and improving their brand storytelling practices.

From a branding perspective, this study enhances branding research by exploring how linguistic patterns in brand narratives strengthen brand identity and may guide consumer engagement. Through

the quantification of narrativity in brand storytelling, the study provides empirical insights that can help brands refine their storytelling techniques. From a linguistic perspective, the study expands narrative theory by examining the roles of staging, plot progression, and cognitive tension in structuring brand narratives. In doing so, this study introduces a novel perspective on how linguistic patterns may contribute to brand perception and identity.

However, the study has limitations. The results' generalisability is limited by the focus on the Nike and Coca-Cola brands, as well as adopting a single narrative framework. Also, while traditional narrative structure frameworks are effective, they do not fully address the unique cultural narratives of brand storytelling or the evolvement of digital media. How audiences perceive these brand narratives was also not investigated. The study utilised the LIWC-22 software to quantify linguistic patterns related to narrative structure and it is important to acknowledge the software's limitations for linguistic analysis.

LIWC-22 does not analyse syntactic structures; instead, it focuses on single words and their category relationships, rather than sentence grammar. The software also does not distinguish between verb tenses (for example, past versus present) or morphological variations such as singular versus plural noun forms. Investigating syntactic features (for example, sentence complexity, tense inflection, and word order) will require additional methods for analysis.

Although this study does not include detailed syntactic analysis, the results are still meaningful for strategic brand storytelling. The software's ability to quantify language features in a large sample provides valuable insights into how brands construct narratives through specific linguistic patterns. This is evidenced by its widespread use in linguistic research to analyse narrative structure (Boyd et al. 2020; Tausczik & Pennebaker 2010).

However, future research must incorporate syntactic parsing tools alongside LIWC-22 for more in-depth linguistic insights. In addition, future studies could include a broader range of brands from various industries, as well as other narrative frameworks. Furthermore, including a qualitative analysis of brand narrative structures through interviews, thematic, narrative, or discourse methods can reveal deeper insights.

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"Wir habEn sehr gut gespieLt"[1]: Findes der en mesolekt i wienerisk tysk?

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Abstract: The paper discusses the variational parameters in the different standards of spoken German in Vienna (Austria). We make a case for three sociolectal layers: A spoken standard approximating (but still markedly different from) Standard German usually associated with higher social levels, a dialectal variety associated with lower social levels, and an in-between level used by all members of the speech community under various conditions. The speakers use code-switching to reflect aspects of the situation with respect to speech-act functions of the utterance (informative or passionate), the level of formality, and the relations to the interlocutors. Traces of this tripartite variational system are found in local texts already in the 1950s, and the situation seems to have been stable since then.

Keywords: Wiener tysk, mesolekt, funktionelt kodeskift, synkroni/diakroni

1. Introduktion: Variationsparametre i tysk og østrigsk tysk

Standardtysk er resultatet af en meget kompleks historie. Udgangspunktet er det skriftsprog, som etablerede sig i det kejserlige kancelli i løbet af middelalderen, og som Luther benyttede som ortografisk norm. Luthers skriftnorm er traditionelt blevet set som en almengyldig norm; den brugtes regelmæssigt som forbillede i de reformerte områder (Wolff 1994: 130-132; Wiesinger 2008: 24)[2]. De katolske områder (med Østrig som kerneland) forsøgte at fastholde deres egne normer for tale og skrift, specielt i de første århundreder efter reformationen, hvor trosspørgsmålene virkelig skilte vandene (Wiesinger 2008: 246-250), men i anden halvdel af det 18. århundrede blev den nordtyske skriftnorm også anerkendt i syd (Wiesinger 2008: 263-269). Konsekvensen blev, at der i Østrig i dag koeksisterer en sydtysk-baseret talesprogsvariant, der markerer høj social status, og en anden talesprogsvariant, som er baseret på den mere nord- og mellemtysk orienterede skriftsprogsnorm. Den sidste form har også status, men ses af mange østrigere som en ikke-hjemlig udgave af standardsproget.

Det østrigske sproglandskab udmærker sig ved at rumme en række varieteter, hvis status har sociolingvistiske valører, og som bruges på distinkte måder i den sociale interaktion. (Moosmüller 1991; Soukup 2009:25). I den ene ende af den sociolingvistiske skala findes de lokale dialekter, og i den anden ende findes der en skriftsprogsorienteret talt standard, som dog er betydelig mindre konsistent, end et mundtligt standardsprog normalt er. Situationen er vanskelig at karakterisere på fyldestgørende vis; ser man for eksempel på de overordnede repertoiremuligheder, er der tale om et mere komplekst billede end traditionel diglossi mellem dialektformer og standardformer. De fleste sprogbrugere har flere varieteter til rådighed og kan vælge imellem dem eller kombinere dem, så ytringerne fremstår som autentiske[3]. For eksempel kan visse dialektale indslag i en ellers standardpræget ytringssekvens have polemisk brod mod andre, men de kan også bruges som signaler om stærke følelser eller blot tage den værste alvor ud af en situation (Soukup 2021: 24-25). På den anden side har mange medlemmer af sprogsamfundet dog betydeligt færre muligheder for at blive anerkendt som autentiske sprogbrugere på alle niveauerne. Mens de, der som udgangspunkt taler standardnært, sagtens kan levere deres dialektale indslag i en mellemform uden at blive set på som uautentiske, vil de, der som udgangspunkt taler dialektnært, sjældent høste anerkendelse for deres

[1] Se afsnit 4 for en forklaring af de her brugte ortografiske konventioner.
[2] Sml. dog Wolffs noget forsigtigere formulering (1994: 131).
[3] 'Autencitet', sml. Blommaert & Varis (2013).

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forsøg på at tilnærme sig standarden.

I vores artikel fokuserer vi dels på interferensen mellem dialekt og standard, dels på stabiliteten i de former, som regelmæssigt findes, når de to niveauer interagerer. Det er frem for alt vores pointe, at mellemniveauet, eller mesolekten, er præget af systemiske og kommunikative forhold, der er unikke for dette niveau og giver det status som et tredje niveau. Vi holder os her primært til fonologiske og morfologiske problemfelter, hvor det er nemmere at trække grænserne mellem de forskellige niveauer end fx ved den syntaktiske variation.

2. Hidtidig forskning

Variationsforskningen i Østrig har gennemløbet de samme faser som den internationale variationsforskning. I den første bølge blev variationen antaget at være mere eller mindre automatiseret med baggrund i den talendes oprindelse, i en anden bølge blev der lagt centralt fokus på samtalesituationen, og i en tredje bølge kom det aktive valg af sprogregister i centrum. De talende ses som kompetente inden for både standardsproget og dialekten, og kodeskift sker i aktivt samarbejde mellem samtalepartnerne i samtalesituationen. I den østrigske dialektforskning har der siden 1970'erne (Soukup 2009 med henvisning til arbejder af Leodolter og Dressler & Wodak; Martin 1996) helt frem til de nyeste bidrag (se fx Soukup 2021; Vollmann 2022) hersket enighed angående analysen af sproglandskabet: det østrigske og dermed det wieneriske dialektlandskab kan beskrives fyldestgørende under antagelse af blot to sproglige registre, nemlig på den ene side den historisk forankrede dialekt, og på den anden side en standard, der er orienteret mod det officielle skriftsprog. Eksistensen af en mesolekt beliggende mellem de to registre og uafhængig af dem begge afvises eksplicit (Martin 1996; Vollmann, personlig meddelelse 2023, se afsnit 4.)

Situationen beskrives som todelt, sådan at de talende (se Soukup 2009) kodeskifter mellem niveauerne helt bevidst og i samarbejde med samtalepartneren og -situationen (Soukup 2021). Soukup (2009) tester talende fra den østrigske delstat Oberösterreich ved at lade dem oversætte isolerede gloser fra standardsprog til dialekt og omvendt og konkluderer herudfra, at alle talende behersker begge registre fuldt ud. Denne metode anser vi ikke som tilstrækkelig i forhold til denne vidtrækkende konklusion. En sådan konklusion kan ifølge vores opfattelse kun underbygges igennem fri, længerevarende tale inden for et register.

I sådanne kontekster kan der nemlig opstå konfigurationer, der ligger mellem maksimal dialekt og maksimal standard. I stedet for at betragte disse konfigurationer som et selvstændigt mesolektregister beskriver den østrigske dialektforskning dem som blandinger (*Mischungen*) af elementer fra standard og dialekt (Martin 1996; Vollmann 2022).

Elementer (fx forskellige udtalevarianter af bestemte ord og morfofonologiske regulariteter), der af alle talende automatisk bliver genkendt som enten standard eller dialekt, er siden 1970'erne blevet betegnet (med perspektiv i afkodningen gennem adressaten) som "input-switches" (Soukup 2009).[4] Disse elementer danner suppletive rækker af former, der er opstået historisk, og der er ingen synkrone regler for afledning af de respektive varianter (dialekt vs. standard) fra hinanden. Formerne er fonetisk tydeligt forskellige og derfor nemme at afkode mht. deres registertilhørighed. Input-switches kan som sagt være gloserækker med systematisk fonetisk variation ((*ich*) *flieg*(*e*) [ˈfliːg̊ə]/[fliːg̊] ↔ *fliag* [ˈfliːɐg̊]; *lieb(e)* [ˈliːb̥ə] / [liːb̥] ↔ *liab* [ˈliːɐb̥]), leksikalske variationer (*nicht* [nixt̊] ↔ *net* [nɛːd̥][5]; *wir* [ˈviːɐ̯] ↔ *mia* [ˈmiːɐ][6]) eller morfofonologiske regulariteter (bortfald af fri-

[4] Soukup (2009: fodnote 84) angiver, at Auer bruger termen 'rules of correspondence' til at fastholde forholdet mellem standard- og dialektformer.

[5] I den traditionelle gengivelse af den wieneriske dialekt i skrift (som vi sine steder benytter for enkelhedens skyld) gengives negationen som *net* eller (sjældnere) *ned*.

[6] I dette tilfælde beror dialektformen på en assimilation mellem endelsen i 1. pers. plur. *-en* og den initiale konsonant.

kativ i udlyd: *ich* ↔ *i:*; *doch* ↔ *do:*; Soukup 2009). Soukup (2009: 46) opsummerer den hidtidige forskning i tabel 1.

Tabel 1. Input-switches i wienerisk tysk ifølge Soukup (2009: 46).

Standard		Dialect	Example			'English gloss'	Comments
[i:]	↔	[ɪɐ]	[l**i:**b̥]	↔	[l**ɪɐ**b̥]	'lovely'	
[u:]	↔	[ʊɐ]	[g**u:**d̥]	↔	[g**ʊɐ**d̥]	'good'	
[aɛ]	↔	[ɔɐ]	[b̥r**aɛ**d̥]	↔	[b̥r**ɔɐ**d̥]	'broad' / 'wide'	
[aɛ]	↔	[a:]	[b̥r**aɛ**d̥]	↔	[b̥r**a:**d̥]		Viennese
[aɔ]	↔	[a:]	[**a**ɔx]	↔	[**a**:]	'too', 'also'	
[a]	↔	[ɔ]	[h**a**d̥]	↔	[h**ɔ**d̥]	'has'	
[vɪɐ]	↔	[mɪɐ]				'we'	
[vɪɐ], [mɪɐ]	↔	[ma]				'we', 'me'	enclitic/unstressed
[niçd̥]	↔	[nɛ:d̥]				'not'	
[d̥as]	↔	[d̥e:s]				'this' / 'the'	
[sind̥]	↔	[san]				'(we/they) are'	
[ç], [x]	↔	0	[iç] [d̥ɔx]	↔ ↔	[i:], [d̥o:]	'I', 'still', 'anyway'	
[y]	↔	[i]	[g**l**yk]	↔	[g**l**ik]	'luck'	
[œ]	↔	[ɛ]	[ˈm**œ**çd̥ɛ]	↔	[m**ɛ**çd̥]	'want'	
[ɔe]	↔	[aɛ]	[ˈh**ɔe**d̥ɛ]	↔	[h**aɛ**d̥]	'today'	
[ʃon]	↔	[ʃɔ̃:]				'already'	
[isd̥]	↔	[is]				'is'	historically attested; but can also be interpreted as consonant-cluster reduction

Vollmann (2022: 35) beskriver situationen på følgende måde (på baggrund af undersøgelserne i Martin (1996), omtalt længere nede):

> However, some switches are more salient than others. For instance, a dialectal variant will sometimes be considered 'more/less dialectal' than others, other forms or phonological realisations will rather be interpreted by speakers as 'low register' (slang) or in terms of 'ease of pronunciation' (casualness, laziness). This perception explains why some 'dialectal' features can enter the meso- or acrolectal register, i.e., the sociolect which, in principle, requires standard language, while other forms are frowned upon if used in formal settings. (vores fremhævning).

Vi fremhæver her på den ene side, at Vollmann nævner det mesolektale register, mens han samtidig henviser til, at formelle situationer i princippet kræver standardsprog. Afvigelser fra dette krav er ildesete. Vi vender tilbage til sprogvurderinger af denne type afvigelser indenfor sprogsamfundet.

I sit studie af det såkaldte *Umgangssprache* (Martin 1996) anerkender Martin både den omtalte to-kompetencer-model og en model med to typer input-switches: de allerede nævnte historisk betingede og dem, der kan forklares via synkrone processer for allegrofonologi. Martin nævner fx nasalassimilation [*ha:bən* > *ha:m*] i *haben* ['have'] som eksempel på sidstnævnte type. Martin mener dog, at disse to modeller ikke kan forudsige de konkrete realiseringer af blandede træk, der findes mellem dialekt og standard. Forfatteren tager inspiration i den svenske dialektolog Mats Thelanders model om mikrovariation mellem dialekt og standard i konkret tale (inden for korte ytringer), hvor der hersker implikationelle relationer mellem enkelte træk angående deres registertilhørsforhold og indbyrdes kompatibilitet (Martin 1996). På basis af en undersøgelse af en serie på fire input-switches i et wienerisk korpus[7] opstiller Martin en implikationel skala af kompatible træk, hvis konkrete konfigurationsmuligheder ligger til grund for dialekt-, standard- og et mellemliggende "Umgangssprache". Martin (1996: 149) anvender fire input-switches i sit studie, som vi sammenfatter i tabel 2.

Tabel 2. Input-switches i wienerisk tysk ifølge Martin (1996: 149) i vores tabelform

Udtrykkets skriftsproglige form	østrigsk standard	wienerdialekt
ich	[iç]	[i:]
nicht	[niçt]	[nɛd̥]
præfiks til perfektum participium-former	[ge]	[k]
diftongen *-ei-* (fx *heiß*)	[ai] ([hɑis])	[a:] ([hɑ:s])

Et eksempel for [ge] vs. [k] som præfiks til perfektum participium-former er standard *gesungen* vs. wienerisk dialekt *k'sungen* ('sunget').[8]

Martin (1996: 151) beregner derefter på basis af sine data en række implikationer mellem disse træk, dog uden at sandsynlighedsværdien (p) altid er signifikant. Forholdet mellem standardnære former og dialektformer er komplekst, idet *k* kan optræde med *ned* [nɛd̥] eller *nicht*, *ge* kan derimod udelukkende optræde med *nicht*; *nicht* optræder med *k* eller *ge*, mens *ned* udelukkende optræder med *k*: *nicht gesungen* eller *nicht k'sungen* eller *net k'sungen*, men **net gesungen* ('ikke sunget').

Ud fra kombinationsberegninger kommer Martin (1996: 154, "Tabelle 8", her gengivet som tabel 3) frem til et system, der på basis af implikationsmønstrene mellem de ovennævnte fire input-switches viser, hvilke træk der er præsente eller fraværende i hhv. standardsprog (Österreichische *Hochsprache*), *Umgangssprache* og wienerisk dialekt.

[7] Martins korpus bestod af optagelser med 24 voksne talende fra Wien på tre tekstuelle niveauer: fuldstændige ytringer, enkelte delsætninger samt en bestemt kort frase ('ich weiss nicht').

[8] Vores eksempler, Martin giver ikke noget selv.

Tabel 3. Implikationsmønstre mellem de fire input-switches i wienerisk tysk, som ifølge Martin (1996: 154) gælder for wienerisk dialekt, østrigsk standardsprog og wienerisk *Umgangsprache.*

Tabelle 8: Varianten der Makrovariablen, die Standard, Umgangssprache und Dialekt für das Wiener Deutsch bestimmen

Wiener Dialekt	Österreichische Hochsprache	
+A [k]	−A [g(ə)]	+A −B −C (Hochsprache)
+B [nɐ̯d]	−B [nɪçt]	+A +B −C (Umgangssprache)
+B [i:]	−B [ɪç]	+A +B +C (Dialekt)
+C [ɑ:]	−C [aɪ]	

Standard omfatter *k*, men ikke de øvrige dialektale træk, mens Umgangssprache omfatter *k*, *ned* og *i:* (for *ich*), dog ikke *ha:s* for *heiß*, som ifølge Martin udelukkende tilhører dialekten.

Martin befinder sig dermed stadig indenfor et beskrivelsesparadigme, der ikke antager et uafhængigt mesolektalt sprogregister, men blot en overgang, hvor der findes en blanding mellem standard og dialekt.

3. Fænomener, der ikke kan forklares som en ren blanding af dialektale træk og standardtræk

Der findes to typer fænomener, der ikke kan forklares med ovennævnte blandingsmodel. Det ene er morfofonologiske hyperkorrektioner (stabile, tilbagevendende dannelser, 3.1.), det andet er wienerisk monoftongering (3.2.).

3.1. Morfofonologiske hyperkorrektioner

Harnisch (2018) kalder hyperkorrektioner en konstitutiv del i diasystemiske sprogsituationer, og han påpeger, at jo større social signalværdi der ligger i de to registre, og jo flere systemiske træk fra den "lavere" variant der gælder som "fejl", des mere sandsynligt er det, at der opstår usikkerhed og dermed bestræbelser for at undgå disse fejl. Hvis sprogbrugerne er usikre på den præcise form, opstår hyperkorrektioner. Blandt de typer af hyperkorrektioner, som Harnisch nævner (2018: 236), er ingen dog helt rammende for de fænomener, der kan iagttages, når usikre talere af wienerisk dialekt stiler efter standardformer. Det, der kommer tættest på, er reparation af en morfofonologisk forstyrrelse ("Störung"), som Harnisch giver følgende eksempel på: når *ge*-reduktion i *gekauft* regulært fører til *g'kafft* (i bayersk dialekt), så kan dialektformen *ghabt* for *gehabt* hyperkorrigeres til **ge-ghabt*. Typiske wieneriske morfofonologiske hyperkorrektioner er for det første vokalrestitueringer i udlyd: syllabisk /n̩/ (eller eventuelt, i særligt eftertrykkelig standard, schwa + *n* /ən/) i frem for alt verbernes infinitiv (*machen* 'gøre'/'lave') bliver fortolket som dialektalt træk og skriftsprogets *e* hyperkorrekt restitueret som [e:n]. Det samme kan findes med udlydende *-e*, der i standardsproget realiseres som schwa (*Bitte* > /'bitə/) – dette kan restitueres som [-e(:)], med eventuel forlængelse (/'bite(:)). I ortografiske kontekster med "-er" (fx i *Bauer* 'bonde'), der i standard udtales med schwa [ɐ], restitueres ligeledes *-e* med et hyperkorrekt resultat [-eɐ].

Et andet fænomen er et i princippet passende foretaget input-switch fra dialektal lateralvokalisering, fx *g'schpü:t* ([kʃpy:t]), tilbage til standardlateral, *gespielt* ('spillet'), men hvor lateralen realiseres i en variant, der tilhører netop det dialektale register med den stærkest mulige stigmatisering, nemlig den velariserede lateral, eller "Meidlinger-*l*", der i den østrigske dialektologi

transskriberes med "ɬ" ([geʃpi:ɬt]). Denne udtalevariant er det træk, der mest af alle associeres med wienerisk dialekt, og samtidig dens mest stigmatiserede (Luttenberger et al. 2021, med henvisning til Moosmüller 1991). Det undgås af talende, der ikke vil bringes i forbindelse med dialekt, og generelt findes fænomenet hyppigere og i mere udpræget grad hos mænd end hos kvinder. Fænomenet forekommer i mange positioner inden for et ord eller en stavelse, dog ikke i alle[9] (Luttenberger et al. 2021). Leksemet *viel* ('meget') er parallelt med *gespielt*: standard [fi:l] vs. dialektalt [fy:] vs. mesolektalt [fi:ɬ]).

I visse leksemer optræder den (restituerede) velariserede lateral derudover sammen med et andet fænomen, nemlig monoftongeringen af en restitueret standarddiftong (se 3.2.). Dette giver en tredelt række af standarddiftong i *weil* ('fordi') [vaɪ̯l] vs. dialektal monoftong af type A ([vœ:]) vs. monoftong af type B, som er resultat af artikulatorisk "drifting" af standardvokalen (Moosmüller & Vollmann 2001) plus restitueret lateral i velariseret form ([vɐ̯:ɬ]).

En anden form for restituering angår kontekster af vokal + nasal: standardsproglige vokaler fulgt af nasaler bliver nasaleret i dialekten, og den nasale konsonant kan derudover bortfalde helt, mens vokalens åbningsgrad følger den sædvanlige lydforskydning mellem standard og dialekt. I tilfældet /a/ bliver dette til [ɑ̯̃] (standard [aŋst] vs. dialekt [ɑ̯̃(ŋ)st], 'angst'). En form, hvor standardversionen søges restitueret, fremviser derimod et specielt /a/ med en tydeligt højere åbningsgrad end det standardsproglige, ledsaget af, hvad vi ville beskrive som faryngal konstriktion (faryngalisering; gengivet af efterstillet "ˤ" i IPA). En støttekonsonant efter den restituerede nasal kan forekomme, muligvis fremmet af konstriktionen ([ɑ̯̃ˤŋ(k)st]). Dette restituerede, konstriktive *a* er i øvrigt ikke begrænset til nasale omgivelser, et eksempel er *zahlen* (med lateral-restitution og hyperkorrekt schwa-restitution): standard [tsa:lṇ] vs. dialekt [tsɑ̯ɪ̯:n] vs. mesolekt [tsɑ̯ˤ:lɐn] ('betale').[10] Til sidst kan man også nævne tredelte morfofonologiske rækker angående (i standard) stærke verbers præsensbøjninger (med omlyd), fx *er/sie/es hält* ('han/hun/det holder'): standard [hɛlt] vs. dialekt [hɑ̯ɪ̯t] vs. hyperkorrekt [haˤltet], dvs. en svag bøjningsform uden omlyd[11].

3.2. Wienerisk monoftongering: "drifting"

Standardtysk har to diftonger, /aɛ/ og /ɑɔ/, som opstod af middelhøjtysk /i:/ og /u:/ og som i wienerisk dialekt er blevet monoftongeret til [ɛ:] og [ɔ:]. Denne relativt sene udvikling blev første gang iagttaget omkring 1900 (Moosmüller & Vollmann 2001) og var senest i 1950'erne fast etableret. Ifølge Moosmüller & Vollmann (2001) er denne proces stort set gennemført hos unge wienere, dvs. de unge talende producerer ikke længere nogen diftonger i disse tilfælde. Forfatterne henviser derudover til Moosmüller (1997), som påpeger, at denne monoftongering er ved at sprede sig i hele Østrig.

Vollmann (2022) klassificerer denne monoftongering som hørende til 'casual/allegro speech styles', som udviser dertilhørende mekanismer mht. artikulatorisk økonomi. Realiseringsgraden af de i standarden tilbageværende diftonger afhænger af postleksikalske betoningsmønstre (Vollmann

[9] Meget gængse positioner er: ordinitialt, efter alveolære eller postalveolære obstruenter, intervokalisk mellem bagvokaler, finalt i diminutiver i "-erl", hvilket i øvrigt er en undtagelse til den ellers gennemførte vokalisering af lateraler i stavelsesudlyd i det mellembayerske dialektområde (Rausch-Supola et al. 2022 med henvisninger). Vi vover at anfægte muligheden af optræden mellem (og efter) bagvokaler og henviser dertil også til omtale af den typisk retroflekse lateral i disse omgivelser i Luttenberger et al. (2021): "Ein weiteres „L" begegnet uns in österreichischen Varietäten des Deutschen zuweilen, nämlich wenn dem „L" ein Hinterzungenvokal – also ein „U", „O" oder „A"– bzw. ein – „B" vorangeht. Dann tritt häufig der Fall ein, dass die Zunge zur Bildung des Verschlusses zurückgebogen wird".

[10] Uden velarisering, da der er retrofleks realisering efter [a], se Luttenberger et al. (2021).

[11] Harnisch (2022: 44, fodnote 18) nævner ikke dette eksempel direkte, men bemærker vedrørende svage bøjningsformer i anden og tredje person præsens som *fechte(s)t*, *flechte(s)t*, *berste(s)t* for standard *fich(s)t*/*flich(s)t*/*birs(*s)t* ('fægter', 'fletter', 'brister'), at det her ikke blot drejer sig om et skifte i bøjningsparadigmet fra stærkt til svagt, men ydermere eller "frem for alt" om restitueringen af et mere tydeligt *-t*-suffiks (*-et*).

2022). Disse mekanismer står i modsætning til historiske dialekt/standard-input switch-par, men har nu opnået input-switch-funktion. Vollmann (2022, som henviser til Vollmann & Moosmüller 1999, og til Moosmüller & Vollmann 2001) argumenterer for, at denne proces, der oprindeligt blot var variation ('noise'), nu kan fortolkes som socio-pragmatisk betydningsbærende.

Moosmüller & Vollmann (2001: 45) noterer tre forskellige realiseringsformer og dertilhørende registre angående denne udvikling og bemærker (vores oversættelse):

> Siden dialekttalende fra Wien ikke behersker artikulationen af diftongerne /aɛ/ og /ɑɔ/, realiserer de, når de bruger standardsprog, i alle tilfældene formerne [ɛː] og [ɔː]. Sætningen "meine Schwester hat drei Kinder, mein Bruder hat zwei" ['min søster har tre børn, min bror har to'] har følgende realiseringsmuligheder:
>
> (1) a. Wiener Dialekt: [mɛ̃ː'ʃveːsd̥ahɔːd̥'d̥rɛːkl̃ːnda mɛ̃ː'b̥ruada hɔːd̥'tsvaː]
>
> (1) b. Wiener Standard: [mɛnɐ'ʃvɛsd̥ɐ hat'd̥raɛkl̃ndɐ mɛ̃nb̥ruːdɐ hat'tsvaɛ]
>
> (1) c. Wiener Dialekt (Standard): [mɛ̃ːnɛ'ʃveːsd̥a haːd̥'d̥rɛːkl̃ːnda mɛ̃ːn'b̥ruːda haːd̥'tsvɛː]

Af oversigten fremgår, at forfatterne faktisk antager et særskilt register, der er karakteristisk for dialekttalende, der stiler mod en standardrealisering (som de betegner som "dialekt (standard)"). Eksemplerne viser typiske – og tydeligt forskellige – træk for de enkelte niveauer (gengivet i tabel 4, produceret af nærværende forfattere, baseret på Moosmüller/Vollmanns (2021: 45) data).

Tabel 4. Udtalevarianter af *meine*, *mein*, *drei*, *zwei*, *hat* og *Kinder* i wienerisk standardsprog, wienerisk dialekt og wienerisk "dialekt (standard)" ifølge Moosmüller/Vollmann (2021: 45), i vores tabelform.

	standard	**dialekt**	**"dialekt (standard)"**
meine	mɛnɛ	mɛ̃ː	mɛ̃ːnɛ
mein	mɛ̃n	mɛ̃ː	mɛ̃ːn
drei	d̥raɛ	d̥rɛː	d̥rɛː
zwei	tsvaɛ	tsvaː	tsvɛː
hat	hat	hɔːd̥	haːd̥
Kinder	kl̃ndɐ	kl̃ːnda	kl̃ːnda

I wienerisk standard afhænger diftongernes realisering af de fonetiske omgivelser, og de resulterende monoftonger er altid korte, mens dialekten og "dialekt (standard)" udelukkende har lange monoftonger, dog ikke altid de samme: [tsvaː] vs. [tsvɛː] (*zwei*). Bemærk derudover restitueringen af nasalen i *mein* ([mɛ̃ː] > [mɛ̃ːn]) og af *-ne* i *meine* ([mɛ̃ː] > [mɛ̃ːnɛ]) uden afnasalering af vokalerne, og forskellene på vokalkvalitet og -længde i *hat*. "Dialekt (standard)" og dialekt deler derudover udlyd [a] i *Schwester/Kinder/Bruder*, hvor standard har [ɐ].

Moosmüller & Vollmann (2001) noterer desuden, at en persons brug af den dialektale variant (dvs. lange monoftonger, i modsætning til standardsprogets korte monoftonger) kan være resultatet af forskellige intentioner. I den ene ende af skalaen kan dette indikere, at personen slet og ret ikke råder over et yderligere variationsspektrum, i den anden ende kan det betyde, at personen udtrykker

en sociopolitisk værdiholdning ved at vende sig bevidst mod normsproget. Fortolkningen afhænger af interaktionspartnerne og deres holdninger (tolerance vs. fordomme) og forhandles konstant i selve interaktionen.

Vollmann (2022) påpeger derudover, at urbane dialekttalende oftest bruger standard[12], når de taler til børn, som først i 4-6-årsalderen opnår kompetence i dialektbrug og kodeskift mellem niveauerne.

Relevant for vores analyser herunder er også Vollmanns (2022) bemærkning om lokalradioværternes udfordring ved at skulle manøvrere mellem den standardkrævende udsendelsessituation og tilpasningen til dialekttalende lyttere, som ringer ind *live*. Værterne elaborerer derfor dialekten til en 'standarddialekt', hvor åbenlyse dialektformer undgås eller danner baggrund i ubetonede funktionsord, og hvor leksikalske lån fra standardsproget adapteres fonologisk. Interessant er her Vollmanns (2022: 45) eksempel "[gɛbʀaxt] eller [gɛbʀɑxt], ikke [b̥ʀɔxt])" for *gebracht* ['bragt'], hvor den anden form er gengivet med vokalen [ɑ], som kunne repræsentere hvad vi i 3.1. har defineret som en meget åben *a*-lyd med faryngal konstriktion (/a̟ˤ/), typisk for det mesolektale register, og som forekommer specielt dér, hvor man finder input-switch-parret /a/ > /ɔ/ mellem standard og dialekt. Denne lyd er ellers ikke fundet omtalt andre steder i litteraturen, men anekdotisk kan det suppleres, at førsteforfatterens mor reagerer meget fordømmende overfor den, når hun hører den realiseret.

Alle disse eksempler viser, at der opstår former, der hverken tilhører en egentlig standardsfære eller en egentlig dialektal sfære. Ikke desto mindre er de stabile og tilbagevendende.

4. Historiske eksempler på negative værdidomme af "dialekt (standard)": "Fußballerdeutsch" og "Gewerkschaftsdeutsch"

Den østrigske fodboldlegende Hans Krankl (der havde sin aktive storhedstid i 1980'erne og nu er fodboldtræner, se også afsnit 7.4.2) kommer fra beskedne, dialekttalende kår. I takt med sine succeser blev han interviewet i medierne, hvor han i lyset af den officielle situation så sig foranlediget (eller blev opfordret) til at producere et standardnært sprog. Indholdet "wir haben sehr gut gespielt" ['vi har spillet meget godt'] – i ren dialekt: "mia hom sea guat g'schpü:t" – blev til "wir hab**E**n sehr gut gespie**Ł**t", med hyperkorrekt fuldvokal foran "n" i *haben* (her signaleret ortografisk med "**E"**) og den som lavdialektal stigmatiserede, velariserede form af den (ligeledes re-konstituerede) lateral (her signaleret ortografisk med "**Ł"**).[13] Dette Krankl-citat blev en *running gag* i Østrig, og dermed opstod udtrykket "Fußballerdeutsch".

En anekdote fra 1950'erne beretter, at en professor på Wiener Hochschule für Welthandel brugte følgende udtryk nedladende over for en studerende under en offentlig mundtlig eksamen: "Sie mit Ihrem Gewerkschaftsdeutsch!" ('De med Deres fagforeningstysk!'). Baggrunden for denne betegnelse er, at fagforeninger dengang var båret af personer fra arbejderklassen, som i offentlige sammenhænge så vidt muligt tilstræbte at tilpasse deres tale til standardsproget, med et resultat lig det i Hans Krankls tilfælde.

Disse sproglige varieteter blev dermed gennem navngivning konceptualiseret som systemiske. Det er selvfølgelig ikke det samme som, at de *er* strukturelt systemiske, men navngivningen vidner om genkendelighed og tilskrivning af identitet til en talergruppe.

[12] Hvilket ofte ville være "standard (dialekt)" i Vollmanns terminologi (vores bemærkning).

[13] Ifølge Ralf Vollmann (personlig meddelelse, 2023) er Krankl en rent dialekttalende med en ret sekundær socialisering i standardsproget, som han dog skal bruge akrolektalt, og dette får ham til at lyde som en ikke-modersmålstalende. Han har et begrænset standardsprog, men bliver nødt til at bruge det, når han taler offentligt. Diskrimination forekommer kun, når konteksten ikke passer. Dialekten er stigmatiseret i den akrolektale brug, men ikke i folkelige kontekster.

5. Hidtidig forskning

Vi har i de foregående afsnit set, at der findes følgende fænomener, der ikke tilhører standarden, men som heller ikke tilhører dialekten: standarddiftongernes monoftongering med lang vokal, hyperkorrektioner (også i restituerede kontekster i forbindelse med velariseret lateral), nasale vokaler ved siden af restituerede nasaler, det faryngaliserede /a̰ˤ/ samt svagt bøjede præsensformer ved visse verber, der bøjes stærkt i standard. Dertil kommer nogle syntaktiske fænomener, som dog ville kræve nøjere dialekthistoriske undersøgelser, idet fænomenerne ikke omtales i den akademiske litteratur, kun i den populært formidlende[14].

I og med at ovennævnte fænomener typisk korrelerer med hinanden i situationer, hvor dialekt er fravalgt (dvs. de dialektale input-switches typisk undgås, jf. Martins tabel 8), ligesom disse korrelationer er systematiske, foreslår vi her at tage hele skridtet ved at antage eksistensen af et wienerisk mesolektregister, der netop ikke er dækket af Martins Umgangssprache, idet sidstnævnte udelukkende indeholder rene dialekt- og standardtræk.

I den kendsgerning, at der findes særskilte former, der optræder systematisk og som hverken findes i ren dialekt eller ren standard, har vi et strukturelt argument for eksistensen af sådan et særskilt mesolektalt register. Derudover har vi mindst to argumenter angående dette registers sociale eksistens, dvs. registrets eksistens i de talendes bevidsthed som en konceptuel enhed: for det første er det som et særskilt koncept på forskellige måder navngivet af medlemmerne af sprogsamfundet ("Fußballerdeutsch", "Gewerkschaftsdeutsch"), og for det andet vil vi ved hjælp af empiriske data vise, at denne mesolektale variant opfylder nogle ganske bestemte pragmatiske funktioner (afsnit 6. nedenfor), som kan forudsige kodeskift mellem dialekt og mesolekt på den ene side og standard og mesolekt på den anden, og at denne situation har været stabil siden 1950'erne.

Dette mesolektregister er igen lagdelt i mindst to, og der er høj korrelation mellem det højere register og kvindelige talende og det lavere register og mandlige talende (jf. Luttenberger et al. 2021, om den velariserede lateral). Forekomsten af morfofonologiske hyperkorrektioner[15], af velariseret lateral samt komplet, lang monoftongering markerer det lavere niveau, mens korte monoftonger eller diftonger med reduceret (flad) udtalebue, konstriktivt *a*, svag præsensbøjning for stærke verber og hyperkorrekte syntaktiske fordoblinger (*wir sehen sich uns*) er typiske for det højere niveau.

Det skal dog nævnes, at fx Vollmann ikke er enig i fortolkningen, at hyperkorrekte fænomener kan udgøre et særskilt register. For Vollmann er det hyperkorrekte *-en* ([e:n]) en standardsproglig form - som fx Krankl dog danner forkert, fordi han har en forkert forestilling om normerne, ligesom en talende fra overklassen kan have forkerte forestillinger om dialekten. Med andre ord kan medlemmer af et sprogsamfund have en mangelfuld eller fejlbehæftet kompetence vedrørende sociofonologisk variation (personlig meddelelse, 2023).

6. Mesolektens pragmatiske funktioner

Mesolekten som *gennemgående* (i hvert fald intenderet) *registervalg* hos ellers dialekttalende forekommer i sammenhænge, hvor standardsproget anses som ønskværdigt. Det gælder fx alle situationer med offentlig tale: medieoptræden (jf. Hans Krankl) og anden kontakt med autoriteter (fx

[14] Fx i Wehle (1980); typiske syntaktiske fænomener er funktionsordsfordoblinger: fx *kleiner als wie* (s. 45, i stedet for *kleiner als* i komparativkontekster, 'mindre end'), *schreiben Sie sich Ihnen das auf* (s. 56, i stedet for *schreiben Sie sich das auf* i refleksive kontekster; 'skriv De det ned for Dem'), *Eindruck […], der was Ihnen […] zusteht* (s.56, i stedet for *Eindruck, der Ihnen zusteht* som relativindleder; 'indtrykket, som Dem tilkommer'), *[…], dass damit also nicht fremde Menschen über einen Wiener lachen* (s. 57, i stedet for *dass also nicht fremde Menschen lachen* som finalsætningsindleder; 'sådan at fremmede mennesker ikke griner ad en person fra Wien'); anekdotisk kan det tilføjes, at den gængse fordoblede mesolektale form *treffen wir sich uns* ['lad os os mødes'] i førsteforfatterens familie jævnligt blev parodieret med et (ikke-dokumenteret) *treffen wir sich uns einander* (kombination af erstatning af dialektalt *sɛ* med standard *sich* + neutralt register *uns* + højt skriftligt register *einander*).

[15] Undtagelsen er her den hyperkorrekte schwa-restitution, der også høres hos kvinder, når de henvender sig til børn og kæledyr. Kvinders tale tilhører normalt det højere mesolektale register.

eksamenssituationen). Mens denne type variation ikke er ukendt i andre situationer, hvor forskellen på høj- og lavsproglig form er markant, er det rent socialt mere bemærkelsesværdigt, at den wieneriske mesolekt regelmæssigt bruges ved tale til bestemte adressatgrupper. Dialekttalende, der som nævnt ofte stiler mod at opdrage deres børn til standard (Vollmann 2022), kan producere mesolekt i tale rettet mod børn (7.1.). Derudover kan mesolekten bruges overfor ikke-tysktalende (eller minimalt tysktalende) samt kæledyr (7.3.).

Mesolektbrug forekommer derudover som *lokalt kodeskift*, fx emnebetinget ved hele sætninger, der skal give en effekt af højtidelighed. Derudover forekommer det ved 'dannede' enkeltord: fagudtryk, fremmedord og ord fra højtidelige semantiske felter. Endelig kan lokalt kodeskift produceres af dialekttalende med ønske om at producere en standardform (se Hans Krankl i 7.4), eller som citat af standardtalende, ofte med en kritisk undertone (se 8.2).

Talende med standardsproglige kompetencer benytter mesolekten i parodier, der per definition markerer afstandtagen, dog ikke nødvendigvis på en aggressiv måde, men også godmodigt (som i 8.1 og 8.3), samt evt. i tale rettet mod børn, udlændinge og kæledyr. Standardtalende benytter de egentlige dialektformer i nogle helt andre situationer:

- emfase (emotionel, narrativ: klimaks/kommentar til klimaks, kritikrelateret etc.)
- afreagering (typisk i forbindelse med bandeord)
- når den talende formoder, at brug af standard kan opleves af samtalepartneren/publikum som snobberi (jf. Vollmann 2022):
  - for at signalere folkelighed, afslappethed og uformel stemning (sml. afsnit 8)
  - for at opnå accept/velvilje hos dialekttalende
  - for at honorere deres dialekttalende ophav eller hovedsagelige omgangskreds
- for at signalere venstreorienteret indstilling (solidarisering med arbejderklassen)

7. Synkrone, anekdotiske eksempler på anvendelsesfunktioner

Med henblik på læsbarheden er mesolekten og dialekten i det følgende ikke længere gengivet med IPA, men med en tilnærmet ortografi af den art, som også bruges i dialektordbøger, grammatikker og gengivelser af sangtekster og poesi i dialekt. Eksemplerne (1)-(4) samt (6) og (7) er observationer, der er blevet noteret. Eksempel (5) er konstrueret. (8)-(12) er udsnit af en løbende samtale på *live*-TV.

I (1) ses en forekomst af tale henvendt til børn. En mor viser sit ca. 2-årige barn en låsemekanismes funktion ved at åbne og lukke den, understøttet af ordene

(1) "Aufmach**E**n – zumach**E**n – aufmach**E**n – zumach**E**n".
'lukke op – lukke i – lukke op – lukke i'

I eksempel (2) parodierer komikergruppen Maschek et udsnit af østrigsk børnefjernsyn fra 1970'erne via v*oiceover*[16]. En dialekttalende klovn henvender sig til børnene i publikummet og advarer dem mod at tage narkotika (*Drogen*). Både dette ord og en opfordring til børnene om at høre godt efter (*Ohren aufsperren* 'lukke ørerne op') er markeret med restitueret vokal foran *n* i udlyd.

(2) So, liabe Kinda ['liebe Kinder'], heit dazöh i eich wos ['heute erzähle ich euch etwas'], das Thema is: „Ke:ne Macht den Drog**E**n". Und dass i' net ẽ:'gschpeat wea ['und damit ich nicht

[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2z0QyeofM0

eingesperrt werde'], [eftertrykkeligt henvendt til publikummet] müssts[17] Ihr die Ohr**E**n aufsperr**E**n
'Nå, kære børn, i dag vil jeg fortælle jer noget. Temaet er: Ikke lade narkotika få magten. Og for at jeg ikke skal blive spærret inde, må I lukke ørerne op.'

Eksemplerne (3) og (4) viser tale henvendt til kæledyr. I (3) taler en kvinde ved nabobordet på en café på dialekt med sin bordherre. Pludseligt bliver hun opmærksom på sin hunds (stramme) halsbånd. Hun bøjer sig ned til hunden og løsner halsbåndet med ordene:

(3) "Locker mach**E**n!"
'Gøre løs!'/'Løsne!'

I eksempel (4) serverer førsteforfatterens veninde fra Wien, som ikke er dialekttalende, foder for sin hund og siger med eftertryk:

(4) "Ess**E**n!"
'Mad!'

Mesolekten forekommer også i tale rettet til udlændinge. Eksempel (5) er som sagt konstrueret på baggrund af en meget gængs praksis, der også har en lang tradition for at blive parodieret af komikere. Vi har dog desværre ikke kunnet finde konkrete belæg i litteraturen eller online. På byggepladsen kan en wienerisk byggearbejder finde på at sige til sin udenlandske kollega (typisk i kombination med infinitiv samt personligt pronomen, og det hele i en ordstilling, der ikke er grammatisk, men informationsfordelingsmæssigt meget logisk):

(5) "Du Zieg**E**l[18] hol**E**n!" ("Hol (du) (die) Ziegel!")
'Dig teglsten hente!'/'Hent (du) teglsten(ene)!'

I det følgende gengives eksempler på kodeskift fra en længere privat samtale overhørt på et *Austrian Airlines*-fly, der indeholder tre aspekter af kodeskift (emne, citat og emfase). To midaldrende kvinder, der rejser sammen, taler en lettere dialektpræget varietet. Da samtalen falder på en svær familiesituation hos den ene, skifter begge til standard (markering af det seriøse emne) og opretholder dette valg med to korte undtagelser. Den berørte kvinde siger på et tidspunkt, da de drøfter, hvor belastende en sådan situation er:

(6) "*Da muss man einen klaren Deal haben* [standard]: "*I moch des* ['ich mach(e) das'], *du mochst des* ['du machst das'], *ich moch des, du mochst des*" [skift til dialekt for at markere en citatagtig reference til en naturlig samtale på dialekt]."
'Så må man have en klar aftale [standard]: Jeg gør dét, du gør dét, jeg gør dét, du gør dét [dialekt].'

Den anden kvinde svarer på dette:

[17] Det udlydende "s" i "müssts" stammer fra det personlige pronomen "es" i anden person pluralis (oprindeligt dualis). "Es" findes i både bayersk og wiener dialekt og er begge steder derudover blevet omfortolket til en verbalendelse i anden person pluralis. Det findes i både dialekt og mesolekt i Wien (dette giver dobbeltformer som *Kommts es?* 'Kommt ihr?).

[18] I standard ville "Ziegel" enten have schwa eller Ø foran /l/ i udlyd (med syllabisk *l*). I dialekt ville der være syllabisk *l* ([tsiagl]), eventuelt med /g/ reduceret til approksimant.

(7) "*Ich bewundere dich!* [i meget eftertrykkeligt standardtysk, der markerer højtidelighed] [kataforisk pause i talen] *I kennt des ne:t* ['ich könnte das nicht']! [eftertrykkelig dialekt for at markere emotionel emfase og eventuelt udsagnets pointe]".
'Jeg beundrer dig [standardudtale]. Det ville jeg ikke kunne' [markeret dialekt].'

Vi afslutter præsentationen af synkrone data med uddrag fra et live-talkshow for at følge longitudinalt op på én bestemt talendes (Hans Krankls) offentlige sprogbrug (se 5). Live-talkshowet *Fellner! Live* (2018[19]), hvor Hans Krankl er gæst, indeholder fem aspekter af kodeskift (offentlig tale, tilpasning til publikum/"folkelighed", højtideligt emne, ord fra højere register og citatlignende formuleringer).

Følgende er nødvendig baggrund for vores eksempler: de to wieneriske eksfodboldspillere Hans Krankl og (nygifte) Toni Polster fra samme æra (1980'erne), som begge nu arbejder som trænere, interviewes angående en tredje fodboldtræner, Dietmar (Didi) Kühbauer, som har forladt sin gamle klub *St. Pölten* til fordel for den mere prestigefulde *Rapid* (Hans Krankls oprindelige klub), hvilket både studieværtWolfgang Fellner og Krankl anser som et svigt, mens Polster viser mere forståelse.

Da udsendelsen er en offentlig situation, gør studieværten Fellner brug af et mesolektalt register i introduktionen til udsendelsen:

(8) ***ei**n Thema* […] *höchste Zei**t*** (begge med diftonger, dog lettere flade).[20]
'et tema – [det er ved at være] højeste tid'

Værten begynder at blande dialekt ind, da han taler til sine gæster, nok for at fremstå som folkelig og for at honorere deres dialektale baggrund:

(9) *seavas* ['servus'] *Hans*; *seavas Toni - seit waun* ['wann'] ***verheiratet****?* (det sidste ord udløser mesolekt grundet sin højtidelige betydning).[21]
'Hej Hans, hej Toni, hvor længe har du været gift?'

Toni Polster taler mesolekt med få undtagelser, selvom studieværten stiller spørgsmål på dialekt. Han viser en tydelig omhu med henblik på at respektere den offentlige situation:

(10) *ganz so schlimm is[t es] nicht, Wolfgang, … du weisst, es san* ['sind'] *erst acht* [dvs. ikke dialektalt 'ocht'] *Runden gespielt* [ikke dial. *g'schpü:t*; og uden Meidlinger *l*); *es müssn* [ikke dial. 'mia:sn'] *noch viele Siege folgn* [ikke dial. *foign*, og uden schwa-restitution foran syllabisk *n* i *folgen*].
'helt så slemt er det ikke, Wolfgang … du ved, der er først blevet spillet otte runder, der må komme mange sejre bagefter'

Hans Krankl taler mest dialekt, men skifter i korte overgange til mesolekt. Dette gør han ret systematisk ved gloser fra et højere register (dannede ord, fagudtryk) inklusive en række efterfølgende ord[22], samt en eller to gange ved en formulering, der virker som et citat fra fx en

[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yh3Co4YKdjA

[20] Alle tre samtalepartnere kan siges at forblive på det mesolektale niveau (flade diftongbuer, tydeligt ikke-aspirerede klusiler (alle følgende forekomster) /ptk/ samt ustemte /bdg/, et yderligere kendetegn for wienerisk tysk, som dog kan være mere eller mindre udpræget alt efter det tilstræbte sprogregister), dvs. at de tre talende aldrig i løbet of udsendelsen når standardniveau.

[21] For radioværters manøvrering mellem registre, se Vollmann (2022), omtalt i 3.2.

[22] Dvs. at mesolekten fortsat benyttes ved de første få ord efter den glose, der udløser skift til mesolekten, hvorefter der skiftes tilbage til dialekt.

avisartikel (standardformerne fremhævet via understregning, det eventuelle udløsende ord, fx *Charakter* nedenfor i fed):

(11) *Des woa* ['das war'] *so* …, *er* [= Kühbauer; derudover: personligt pronomen i subjektsposition bruges kun i skriftsprog – i talt sprog og dialekt ville der bruges demonstrativpronomen *der*] *wurde zwei Mal* [ikke dial. 'zwa moi'] *von Rapid abgełehnt*[23], *und I hob ma scho docht, waun er an* ['und ich habe mir schon gedacht, wenn er einen'] ***Charakter*** *hätte, dann hätte er das nicht gemacht* [højregisterglose *Charakter* udløser mesolekt i stedet for dial. 'hetta des net g'mocht'], *muass ava of da ondan Setn song* [tilbage til dialekt for 'muss aber auf der anderen Seite sagen'] …; *im* ***Endeffekt*** *verstehe ich, dass er es macht* [dannet glose *Endeffekt* udløser passage i mesolekt].
'Det var sådan det var … han [Kühbauer] blev to gange afvist af Rapid, og jeg tænkte mig, at hvis han havde karakter, så havde han ikke gjort det. Men jeg må på den anden side sige at til syvende og sidst [im Endeffekt] forstår jeg, hvorfor han gjorde det.'

Krankl taler derefter om fodboldklubben Rapid:

(12) ... *in der* ***Rapidführung befindet sich*** *nicht éin Mann* [dannet glose *Rapidführung* udløser en passage i mesolekt, samtidigt med at passagen igen lyder citatagtigt grundet det skriftsproglige *befindet sich*, som i talesprog ville erstattes med *ist* eller *gibt (e)s*; *nicht éin Mann* ville svare til dialekt 'net á mɔ̃(n)'], *der a Ohnung hot* [tilbage til dialekt: 'der eine Ahnung hat'].
'… i Rapidledelsen er der ikke én eneste mand, der har forstand på noget som helst.'

Ud fra disse belæg kan vi for det første konstatere, at kodeskift ifølge de i afsnit 6. beskrevne principper er yderst produktivt synkront, og for det andet, at det har holdt sig stabilt hos Hans Krankl siden 1980'erne. I det følgende vil vi se, at denne diakrone stabilitet kan dokumenteres for sprogsamfundet i Wien generelt helt tilbage fra 1950'erne.

8. Mesolektens stabilitet over tid

Vi vil her ved hjælp af eksempler fra populærkulturen (sange) fra midten af 1900-tallet til i dag dokumentere det mesolektale registers robusthed, både med hensyn til mesolektens sproglige egenskaber og med hensyn til funktionerne, hvilket markeres igennem kodeskift mellem de enkelte varieteter. Også her er mesolekt og dialekt gengivet med en tilnærmet ortografi, som også bruges i gengivelsen af sangteksterne online; enkelte steder har vi valgt at tilpasse online-ortografien til den, som vi har valgt for vores gengivelser i den øvrige artikel, enten pga. inkonsekvenser eller for at kompensere for en diskrepans mellem den valgte audiooptagelse og online-sangteksten. Eksemplerne er valgt med følgende tre kriterier in mente: i) forekomst af kodeskift, ii) kronologisk spredning og iii) ikonisk status af sangene inden for den østrigske populærkultur, både samtidigt og efterfølgende.[24]

[23] Med velariseret lateral; en dialektversion ville af fonotaktiske årsager (efter velær lukkelyd) grundet synkope af *e* være uden velarisering ("obg'lehnt"). Passagen lyder citatagtigt, også grundet præteritumsformen (*wurde*), da præteritum generelt ikke forekommer i østrigsk talesprog (der bruges førnutid i stedet).

[24] Den ikoniske status af de sange, vi diskuterer, er dokumenteret her: https://www.kabarettarchiv.at/Kabarett-der-1950er-Jahre for 8.1, https://austriancharts.at/showitem.asp?interpret=Wolfgang+Ambros&titel=Zwickt%27s+mi&cat=s for 8.2 samt https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amadeus-Verleihung_2016 og https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amadeus-Verleihung_2019 for 8.3.

8.1. "DER G'SCHUPFTE FERDL" ('smart-i-en-fart-Ferdinand'), 1952

Sangen omhandler Ferdinand "Ferdl"[25] fra arbejderkvarteret *Hernals* i Wien. Han vil gerne være chik og in; han prøver at klæde sig elegant, men sangteksten antyder, at det ikke rigtigt lykkes. Han tager til dans[26] med sin kæreste Mitzi[27], hvor han ender i et slagsmål. Teksten er skrevet på dialekt, men indeholder citatagtige passager, som kan fortolkes som dækket direkte tale, som parodierer Ferdinand og andres prætentiøse tanker om sig selv ved hjælp af mesolekt. Også indholdet på et skilt bliver gengivet og parodieret i mesolekt. Derudover udløser dannede gloser igen mesolektale passager.[28] Passager med mesolekt (og evt. standardsprog) er markeret med **fed**. I første vers omtales Ferdinands grøn-gul-stribede sokker, som han selv synes er meget elegante, samt fagudtrykket for brylcremen som fuldender hans look, i mesolekt:

(13) He:te ['heute'] ziagt ['zieht'] da g'schupfte Ferdl frische Sockn an
'I dag tager fjollede Ferdinand friske sokker på'
Grün [dial.'grean'] und **gelb** [mit velariseret lateral; dial. 'gö:b'] **gestre:ft** [med monoftongering af standardformen; dial. 'g'schtra:ft'], das ist so **elegant** [med velariseret lateral**;** er udelukkende en standardglose]
'Grøngul-stribede, det er så elegant'
Schmiert mit feinsta **Brillantine**[29] [med velariseret lateral] seine Łockn [med velariseret lateral] an
'Smører sine lokker med den fineste brillantine'
Putzt de Schuach ['die Schuhe'] und nocha haut a se ins Gwã:nd ['nachher wirft er sich ins Gewand/in die Kleidung'] …
'Pudser skoene, og så tager han tøj på'

I næste vers markerer "mit vergnügtem Sinn" et højt skriftsprogligt register, der igen parodierer Ferdinands (og hans kæreste Mitzis) højtidelige tanker om sig selv. I danseskolens garderobe hænger et skilt, hvis indhold parodisk citeres i mesolekt: først fagudtrykket „Schild" udtalt med eftertrykkeligt velariseret lateral, derefter tiltalen "die p.t. Gäste"[30] og efterfølgende den traditionelle formulering "werden höflichst gebet**E**n", men udtalt med eftertrykkelig mesolektal vokalrestitution før *n*, og det samme i rimet "betret**E**n" i næste vers (selve ordet "betreten" er ligeledes skriftsprogligt). Slutteligt er også "Tanzlokalität" skriftsprogligt: det udtales her overtydeligt, hvilket igen fremhæver det prætentiøse.

[25] Med wienerisk diminutiv *-l*.

[26] Med reference til en ærkewienerisk tradition: at gå i en danseskole, som i weekenderne holder "perfektion", dvs. åbner sine døre for selskabsdans uden undervisning, sådan at eleverne kan forbedre deres danseprætestationer, dog ofte brugt som rent social begivenhed.

[27] "Mitzi" er en meget wienerisk kæleform for "Maria".

[28] Tekst og musik: Gerhard Bronner, 1952; fremført af Helmut Qualtinger (ukendt årstal); begge er legendariske (nu afdøde) østrigske kabarettister. (lydoptagelse: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEGvFccaXpQ&list=RDsEGvFccaXpQ&start_radio=1, sidst tilgået 5. august 2025; teksten er en tilpasset version af: https://www.musixmatch.com/de/songtext/Helmut-Qualtinger/Der-G-schupfte-Ferdl).

[29] 'brylcreme'.

[30] "p.t." står for "pleno titulo" (https://abkuerzungen.woxikon.de/abkuerzung/pleno%20titulo.php , dvs. 'med fuld titel'): titler af enhver art har været og er stadig meget vigtige i det østrigske samfund; derfor tiltalte man tidligere for en sikkerheds skyld alle mennesker med "p.t." for at undgå, at titelejere følte sig stødt grundet mangel på honorering.

(14) So geh'n die beiden mit **vergnügtem Sinn** zum Thumser[31] hin
'Så går de begge med fornøjet sind hen til Thumser.'
Bei der Gadrobe sehen sie ein großes **Schiłd** [dial. 'Schü:d']:
'Ved garderoben ser de et stort skilt:'
"Die **p.t.** Gäste werdn **höflichst gebetEn**
'De ærede gæster anmodes høfligst'
Die **Tanzlokalität** ohne Messer[32] zu **betretEn**" …
'Om at betræde danselokalet uden kniv.'

I næste vers er en række højtidelige gloser og formuleringer mesolektalt markeret via velariseret lateral, igen for at parodiere Ferdinands floskelagtige, prætentiøse opfattelse af situationen ("Ełan", "Ełastizität", "sich von selber verstehen"). Omtalen af musikstykket som "gespiełt" med velariseret lateral er igen parodisk citatagtigt, idet det indeholder reminiscenser fra enten koncertplakater eller annonceringer af optrædende kunstnere igennem en konferencier.

Til sidst står Ferdls navn for første gang i den officielle variant "Ferdinand" og fagudtrykket "Parkett" i komisk kontrast til verbet "schleifen" ('slæbe', 'trække', 'hive') og omtalen af hans kæreste som "de Mitzi" (med talesproglig artikel "die").

(15) Da fangt ['fängt'] mit Schwung und **Ełan [**med velariseret lateral**;** er udelukkende en standardglose**]**
'Så begynder med stor energi'
A g'schtampfta ['gestampfter'] Tschitabug ['Jitterbug', en dans] an
'En stampet jitterbug.'
Gespiełt [dial. 'g'schpü:t'] von Tscharłie ['Charlie', velariseret lateral] Woprschaleks Goidn [engl. 'Golden' med regelmæssig wienerisk dialektal lydforskydning] Boys aus Hernois [arbejderkvarteret Hernals i Wien][33],
'Spillet af Charlie Woprschaleks Golden Boys fra Hernals'
Und mit **Ełastizität [**med velariseret lateral**;** er udelukkende en standardglose**]** Die **sich** von **selba** [sö:ba] **versteht**
'Og med en selvfølgelig elasticitet'
Schłe:ft ['schleift'] da **Ferdinand** de Mitzi aufs **Parkett** …
'Slæber Ferdinand Mitzi på dansegulvet.'

8.2 "*ZWICKTS[34] MI (I man i dram)!*" *('Zwickt mich, ich meine zu träumen!', 'Knib mig, jeg tror, jeg drømmer!', 1975*

Sangen er en klassiker fra 1970'ernes dialektpopmusikbølge, som omtalte alvorlige emner (og ikke længere kun brugte dialekten til parodiske formål), formodentlig fremmet af ungdomsoprørets undergravende virkning på den rigide borgerlige kultur (hvilken dog aldrig blev så gennemgående som fx i Danmark). Sangene blev typisk skrevet og fremført af samme person. Denne sang omhandler enkelte scener fra det jævne dagligdags liv i Wien, som forfatteren belyser kritisk, dog uden at tage afstand fra brugen af dialekten. Omkvædet refererer til, at de omtalte forhold forekommer afsenderen for grelle til at være sande, og han beder publikum om at nive ham for at kunne afgøre, om han

[31] En danseskole, der virkelig eksisterede, og som efter sangens udgivelse stævnede Bronner for dårlig omtale.
[32] Også den spøjse opfordring om ikke at tage kniv med i lokalet er en hentydning til de rå omgangsformer i arbejderkvarteret; Ferdinand afleverer sin, hvilket bliver et problem for ham i det slagsmål, der senere opstår.
[33] Komisk er ligeledes kontrasten mellem det påtagede engelske ("Charlie", "Golden Boys") og det typiske tonguetwister-tjekkiske efternavn "Woprschalek" og den dialektale udtale af "Hernals".
[34] For det udlydende "s" i "zwickts" se fodnote 17.

befinder sig i en ond drøm.[35]

Første vers, som gengives her, citerer en prototypisk selvhøjtidelig borger, der kritiserer (netop) ungdommen for at være forkælet og uden idealer. De efterfølgende vers udstiller denne type borger som korrupt og skinhellig. Denne borgers tale bliver gengivet i mesolekt, mens resten af sangen er skrevet i dialekt, med undtagelse af ét ord fra et højere register.

Citatet fra den skinhellige borger indeholder følgende mesolektale former: "k**e:**n [med mesolektal monoftong] Ide**al**" ('ikke noget ideal', et dannet ord, der aldrig ville følge den regulære dialektale lydforskydning til *[ide'œ:]); det samme gælder "Werte" ('værdier') i filosofisk (i modsætning til den metriske) læsning, hvor bortfald af udlydsschwa er udelukket. "Sinn" i betydning 'Interesse' er ligeledes en dannet brug.[36] Hele den følgende sætning står i mesolekt og "Werte" og "Härte" rimer, men det gør de udelukkende i mesolekt: "Werte" ville ikke blive brugt i dialektale sammenhæng, og det andet ord lyder dialektalt [hea:tn].[37] Ordet "k**e:ne**" ('ingen/intet') indeholder igen en mesolektal monoftong samt den til fuldvokal restituerede udlydsschwa.

(16) "Die Jugend hat k**e**:n [dialekt 'ka'] Id**eal** [eksisterer ikke i dialekt],
kan ['keinen'] **Sinn** [eksisterer ikke i dialekt] für woare [wahre] **Werte** [eksisterer ikke i dialekt]
'Ungdommen har ingen idealer, ingen sans for sande værdier.'
Den jungen Leuten [dial. 'de jungan Łe:t'] geht's zu gut [dial. 'geht's z'guat'], sie kennen k**e:ne** Härte [dial. 'de kennan ka Hea:tn']!"
'Det går de unge mennesker for godt, de har ingen modstandskraft.'

Følgende vers, der afslører citatets typiske afsendere som korrupte og skinhellige, er holdt i dialekt, med undtagelse af det dannede ord "Skandal":

(17) So reden de ['die'], de nur in Oasch krœ:n ['die nur in den Arsch kriechen'],
Schmiagö:d nehman ['Schmiergeld nehmen'], packeln tan ['paktieren'],
'Sådan taler de, der kun slikker andre mennesker bagi, tager mod bestikkelse og handler i porten.'
Noch an ['nach einem'] **Skandal**[38] daun ['dann'] pensioniert wer'n ['werden'],
kurz: a ['ein'] echtes Vurbüld ['Vorbild'] san ['sind'].
'[der] bliver pensioneret efter en skandale, [som] kort sagt er virkelige forbilleder'.

8.3. "HERR INSPEKTOR" (østrigsk tiltale for en kriminalbetjent), 2019

Sidste station er igen en parodisk popsang, der gengiver forhørssituationer i småforbrydermiljøet i Wien. Både de forhørende betjente[39] og (de ikke-tilstående) småforbrydere taler dialekt, men betjentene skifter til mesolekt, når de bruger (rigtigt mange) juridisk-kriminologiske fagudtryk og citatlignende udsagn, som de (med samtidige trusler om vold og straf) forsøger at intimidere de forhørte med. Sangen slutter med fingerede gengivelser af en borgers opkald til alarmcentralen, hvor

[35] Tekst og musik: Wolfgang Ambros, 1975, som sammen med Georg Danzer og Ludwig Hirsch var en af de fremtrædende skikkelser i denne første (alvorlige) dialektbølge. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVoffqksUhc sangtekst (her igen gengivet tilpasset): https://www.flashlyrics.com/lyrics/wolfgang-ambros/zwickts-mi-70 .

[36] "Sinn" som 'Zweck' er dog del af dagligdagssproget/dialekt: "Des ['das'] hot ['hat'] kan ['keinen'] Sinn" ('das hat keinen Zweck', 'det nytter ikke noget').

[37] Med tilføjelse af udlyds-*n,* hvilket er typisk for substantiver på *-e* i standard med feminint genus (Schuster & Schikola 1984: 119); sml. også Krankls "Setn" for "Seite" i vores eksempel (11).

[38] En dialektal form 'skandœ:' kan ikke helt afvises, men i denne sammenhæng understreger mesolektudtalen det alvorlige ved situationen, samt suggererer en skriftsproglig medieomtale.

[39] Nok fordi de både selv er fra beskedne kår, for at møde forbryderne i deres register og fordi bølgerne går højt (emotionel emfase).

disse skifter mellem forholdsvis standardnær mesolekt ("offentlig" tale/alvorlig situation) og dialekt (emotionel emfase).[40]

I første del (forhørene, som er dialoger mellem betjentene og forbryderne) er de mesolektale juridiske og kriminologiske fagudtryk markeret med fed og eventuelt kommenteret. Die ekstensive dialektpassager er oversat til standard:

(18) "Wie Sie wissen nix?" Fongans ã ['fangen Sie an'] zum **Koopariern** [*a*-lyden er mesolektal/dialektal; bemærk: rent syllabisk *n*]
'Hvad for noget, ved du ikke noget? Begynd hellere at samarbejde'
Sunst fang i ['sonst fange ich'] an zum **Eskaliern** [rent syllabisk *n*] und Sie Off werdn ['Sie Affe werden'] **inhaftiert**
'Ellers går jeg hårdere til den [begynder jeg at eskalere] og får sat Dem i spjældet, De abekat!'
Oiso heans ['also hören Sie'] jetzt auf zum Liagn ['Lügen'] und die Sache hot a G'sicht ['hat ein Gesicht']
'Altså, hold nu op med at lyve og få sagen til at arte sig.'
Schauns ['Schauen Sie'] **ich höre gerne zu** [efterligner betjentens offentlig tale: understreger forhørssituationens alvor/højtidelighed], drum dazöhns ma ['darum erzählen Sie mir'] jetzt die G'schicht ['Geschichte']
'Hør her [se her], jeg lytter gerne, så tag nu og fortæl mig historien.'

(19) "Tuad ma lad" ['Es tut mir leid'], a ned a so ['nicht so! ': forbryderens undskyldning er ikke nok], wos i mahn is a ['was ich meine ist ein'] **Geständnis** [dial. 'G'schtändnis']
'Beklager", ikke på denne måde, det, jeg er ude efter, er en tilståelse.'
Waun i wü ['wenn ich will'], dass ana singt ['dass einer singt = 'gesteht] bei mir, verhoft i gach in Fendrich ['verhafte ich gleich mal den Fendrich'[41]]
'Hvis jeg ønsker, at nogen tilstår („synger"), så arresterer jeg straks Reinhard Fendrich'
Schaun Sie, Ihna ['Ihnen'] droht **Gefängnis** [dial. 'G'fängnis'] und des kunnt i Ihna spoan ['könnte ich Ihnen ersparen']
'Hør her, De risikerer at ryge i fængsel, og det kan jeg spare Dem for.'
Oiso heans ['also hören Sie'] jetzt auf zum Singa ['Singen'] und dazöhns ma dass as woan ['erzählen Sie mir, dass Sie es waren']
'Så hold nu op med at angive [andre?] og sig, at det var Dem.'

(20) Na eben, oiso redens ['also reden Sie'], machens Ihna[42] ned zum Offn ['machen Sie sich nicht zum Affen']
'Nå, fint, så snak nu, gør nu ikke Dem selv til nar.'
Das Gesetz steht über allen [citat] und i brauch wen zum Verhoftn ['ich brauche jemanden zum Verhaften'; bemærk, at den mesolektale variant *Verhaften* her er fravalgt, nok grundet rimforholdene]
'Loven står over alle, og jeg er nødt til at anholde nogen.'

[40] Tekst og musik: popduo Seiler und Speer, som producerer både humoristiske og alvorlige dialektsange (dialekten i populærmusikken bliver nu om dage brugt i alle undergenrer), 2019; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4Hd57gNsQ8; sangtekst (igen tilpasset): https://www.kurtwagner.at/repertoire/liedertexte/herr-inspektor/

[41] Rainhard Fendrich, Wiener popsanger (ordspil bygget på *synge/tilstå*)

[42] Bemærk det kun enkelte refleksivpronomen "Ihna" (sml. fodnote 14 om funktionsordsfordobling).

(21) An die Gauner, an die **Verbrecher**
An die leichten Madln [‘Mädchen’: ‘prostituerede’], die **Gesetzesbrecher**
‘Hør her, I slyngler, I forbrydere, I ludere og lovbrydere’
Justitia schläft nicht [citat] und hot kan [‘hat keinen’] Humor
‘Justitia sover ikke og har ingen sans for humor.’
Und wann [‘wenn’] sie uns hoin kummt [‘holen kommt’], dann sing ma [‘singen wir’] im Chor
‘Og når hun kommer for at hente os, så synger vi i kor.’

Sangen slutter med sekvenser af fingerede borgeropkald til alarmcentralen. Mesolektale former er markeret med fed; det bemærkes, at disse former nærmer sig standard: deres diftongbuer er kun lettere udfladet, én gang gengives en sætning helt i standard (”Das ist e:in doppelter Fall für die Polize:i!”) – alt dette markerer den alvorlige og officielle karakter af talen. Dialektale former (der markerer emotionel emfase) er oversat til standard.

(22) Tuad ma lad [‘Es tut mir leid!’] - So a [dial. ‘eine’] **Frechhe:it** [relativ stejl diftongbue]!
‘Beklager - Sikke en uforskammethed!’
Tuad ma lad - Herr Inspektor, hallo! Kummans schnö [‘Kommen Sie schnell’]!
‘Beklager - Hr. betjent. Kom hurtigt!’
Tuad ma lad - Das ist **e:in** [dial. ‘a’; standardudtale med stejl diftongbue] **doppelter Fall für die Polize:i** [tilbage til lettere flad diftongbue]!
’Beklager – Det er hele to sager på én gang for politiet.’
Tuad ma lad, mia datns jo wissn wanns so is [‘wir würden es wissen, wenn es so wäre’]
‘Beklager, vi ville vide det, hvis det var sådan.’
Tuad ma lad - Also so **e:ine** [dial. ‘a‘] **Sauere:i [dial. ‘**Sɔare:’: høj mesolekt trods emotionel emfase, nok grundet den officielle tale**]**!
‘Beklager - Altså sikke en svinestreg!’
Tuad ma lad - Na sowos g’hert [‘so etwas gehört‘] **ja a:ngeze:igt!** [dial. ‘jo ãza:gt’: høj mesolekt trods emotionel emfase, nok grundet den officielle tale]
‘Beklager - Altså, sådan noget skal jo meldes til politiet!’

9. Konklusion

Den gængse østrigske dialektforskning anerkender eksistensen af et “Umgangssprache”-register, der udgøres af en blanding mellem træk af dialekt og standard, under udeladelse af de mest dialektale træk. Til gengæld arbejdes der ikke med noget særskilt mesolektalt register.

I denne artikel har vi argumenteret for, at der findes et sådant tredje sprogligt niveau. Vi har forsøgt at vise, at der findes særskilte former, der optræder systematisk, og som hverken findes i ren dialekt eller ren standard. Det drejer sig om systematiske hyperkorrekte morfofonologiske restitutioner og særegne (lange) diftonger, en konstriktiv *a*-lyd, samt nasalerede vokaler ved siden af restituerende fuldnasaler. Derudover findes der formentlig syntaktisk fordobling af bestemte funktionsord, men på dette område mangler der indtil videre systematisk (akademisk) historisk forskning. Disse former kan sådan set være oprindeligt dialektale, selv om de typisk (også) forekommer i mesolekt. De nævnte strukturelle træk, der hverken kan integreres i et standardsystem eller i et dialektsystem, gør det rimeligt at operere med en tredeling.

Ud over dette systemiske argument har vi også to argumenter angående dette registers sociale eksistens, dvs. eksistens i de talendes bevidsthed som en konceptuel enhed. For det første er det som et særskilt koncept på forskellige måder navngivet af medlemmerne af sprogsamfundet (“Fußballerdeutsch”, “Gewerkschaftsdeutsch”), og for det andet har vi derudover ved hjælp af empiriske data vist, at denne mesolektale varietet opfylder nogle ganske bestemte pragmatiske funktioner, som kan forklare kodeskift mellem dialekt og mesolekt på den ene side og

standard og mesolekt på den anden, og at denne situation tilsyneladende har været stabil siden 1950'erne.

Litteratur

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Intercultural competence in Danish as a second language for adult migrants: A teacher perspective

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Abstract[1]**:** Although studies on intercultural competence (IC) and teacher beliefs are relatively common, no research has yet focused on teachers of Danish as a second language for adult migrants. More broadly, second language teaching in migration contexts, especially for languages other than English, remains significantly underexplored (Ushioda 2017). The primary research questions guiding this study are: 1) How do teachers conceptualize IC? 2) How do they value IC? 3) How do they describe their IC practice? and 4) How does the way that teachers conceptualize and value IC relate to their classroom practices? Findings suggest that while teachers have a relatively broad understanding and recognize the value of IC, they face significant challenges implementing their theoretical knowledge about IC. Notably, there is a weak alignment between teachers' stated beliefs and their observed classroom practices. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of second-language teaching in migration contexts beyond English-language instruction.

Keywords: Second language learning, teacher cognition, intercultural communicative competence, migration, classroom practice

1. Introduction

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram 1997, 2021) plays a pivotal role in theoretical discussions and policy frameworks regarding language education in many contexts around the world, including Denmark, the setting of this study. ICC comprises two main components, communicative competence (CC) and intercultural competence (IC). While work with CC is often systematically targeted in language classrooms, attention to IC is often underemphasized and less systematized. To enable students to develop IC, language teachers need to be and feel equipped for the task. Therefore, it is relevant to explore language teachers' beliefs and feelings of self-efficacy regarding IC. Although studies on IC and teacher beliefs are relatively common, no research has yet focused on the specific context of our investigation – namely, teachers of Danish as a second language for adult migrants. More broadly, second language teaching in migration contexts, especially for languages other than English, remains significantly underexplored (Ushioda 2017).

In contrast to English, Danish is a small national language with limited global reach. Adult learners of Danish are often migrants or refugees who learn the language for purposes of integration into Danish society, rather than for broader international mobility. Exposure to Danish and opportunities for authentic interaction in Danish can be limited for migrants, as Danes are generally proficient in English and resort to English when communicating with migrants (Fernández et al. ms.). Besides, the Danish curriculum is designed with integration, insertion into the labour market, and citizenship in mind, and it is often mandatory for migrants to take up Danish courses in order to receive certain social benefits. A study on Danish as a second language can therefore contribute to our general understanding of IC by illustrating how adult learners develop intercultural competence under conditions of limited natural exposure to the target language, strong local integration demands, and an asymmetrical linguistic environment where English is often chosen over Danish in everyday communication with migrants.

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This paper presents findings from a study on teacher cognition, aimed at identifying the specific "roadblocks" faced in teaching IC in Danish as a Second Language (DSL) to adult migrants. Using an online survey, classroom observations, and interviews, the study explores how DSL teachers conceptualize and implement IC in their teaching practice. The primary research questions guiding this study are: 1) How do teachers conceptualize IC? 2) How do they value IC? 3) How do they describe their IC practice? and 4) How does the way that teachers conceptualize and value IC relate to their classroom practices?

This teacher cognition study constitutes one facet of the larger project "Danish in the Making". This broader project aims to redefine the core knowledge essential for acquiring DSL and revitalize how learners and teachers engage with the language. The overarching objective of this project is to develop a pedagogical resource for DSL classrooms that emphasizes intercultural semantics and pragmatics grounded in the minimal languages approach (Goddard 2021; Sadow & Fernández 2022). The teacher cognition study presented here, a learner cognition study (Fernández et al. ms.), and a teaching materials analysis (Sadow et al. ms.) are all part of the preliminary work for the development of the new learning resource.

This paper is structured as follows: first, an introduction to the context of the study – Danish education for adult migrants – is followed by a brief overview of intercultural communicative competence. Next, we provide a discussion of teacher cognition as a research field, followed by an outline of the methodology and data. The results are presented in relation to the four research questions mentioned earlier. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion including implications.

2. The context: Danish education for adult migrants

In Denmark, a Danish education program (DU, for its initials in Danish, *Danskuddannelse*) is offered to newly arrived immigrants who have turned 18 years of age and have a residence permit or otherwise have permanent, legal residence in Denmark (Ministry of Immigration and Integration n.d.). There are three different DU lines that a migrant can be assigned to:

1) Danish Education 1 (DU1): for those who cannot read and write the Latin alphabet
2) Danish Education 2 (DU2): for those who have a short school and educational background from their home country
3) Danish Education 3 (DU3): for those who have a medium or long school and education background

Each DU consists of six modules (since this research was conducted, as of 1st January 2025, DU1 has been reduced to five modules (SIRI 2025)), each of which concludes with a module test that students must pass to is to the next module. The goal of Danish language instruction across the three lines is to provide students with Danish language skills that enable them to secure employment and become active, equal citizens within Danish society. Therefore, the teaching of Danish as a second language must focus on developing communicative competence and it is explicitly stated that communicative competence includes socio-pragmatic, discursive, linguistic, and intercultural competence. A focus on IC implies, according to the official curriculum, highlighting the importance of understanding Danish cultural and social norms, values, and routines. Additionally, the curriculum suggests exploring differences and similarities between Danish and students' native languages and social contexts (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2022).

To teach in the Danish education program, it is required to have a teaching degree in Danish as a second language. To be admitted to the master's degree in DSL, candidates must have one of the following qualifications:

- A teaching degree with a specialization in languages
- A bachelor's degree in the humanities with a central focus on languages (Ministry of Higher Education and Science n.d.)

The openness regarding qualifications prior to the DSL degree implies that, while most teachers have the same DSL degree, they come from a broad range of bachelor's programs, from politics to Russian literature to theology. This variation is also reflected in the teachers in this study (see section 5).

3. Intercultural (comminicative) competence

The concept of ICC originates from Byram (1997) and describes the overarching goal of second and foreign language teaching, namely, to develop learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. The concept emphasizes the need to combine work on language and communication (*communicative competence*) with the ability to manage encounters with "others" (*intercultural competence* (IC)). Byram's well-known model integrates these two perspectives. The part of the model focusing on IC includes five aspects:

1) Knowledge of oneself and others
2) The ability to interpret and relate
3) An attitude of curiosity and openness, and the willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own, which means "the ability to decenter and take up another's perspective" (Byram 2021: 53)
4) Skills of discovery and interaction
5) Critical cultural awareness, which Byram also names "political education"

The last aspect is central to the model, serving as the culmination and integration of the other components (Byram 2021).

Byram distances himself from what he terms the native speaker model, where the goal is for the foreign language learner to achieve a linguistic level equivalent to an educated native speaker. He considers this both unrealistic and undesirable, as it would require learners to "abandon one language in order to blend into a second linguistic environment" (Byram 2021: 17). Instead, the goal is to perceive and manage the relationship between one's own and others' cultures and become an 'intercultural speaker'. Moreover, Byram (2021) highlights the importance of remembering that it is individuals, not cultures, that meet.

Byram's model is widely used but has been criticized for having a too narrow national orientation and a static view of culture (Matsuo 2012). Language teaching risks perpetuating stereotypes and focusing excessively on national cultures in a superficial manner (Daryai-Hansen & Fernández 2019; Fernández 2015; Löbl 2022). Risager & Svarstad (2020) propose an operationalization of the ICC model through their "cyclical model of intercultural learning", which seeks to avoid this pitfall by engaging in noticing, comparing, reflecting, and interacting. They state that openness and curiosity towards the world are prerequisites for decentralization and perspective-shifting, and thus for intercultural learning (Risager & Svarstad 2020: 34). This approach calls for a constructivist, interactive, and experiential type of learning rather than the mere presentation of cultural information.

4. Teacher cognition as a research field

Simon Borg (2003: 18), a leading figure in the study of *language teacher cognition*, defined the research area as dealing with "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers

know, believe and think". Research on teachers' knowledge and beliefs emerged as an academic discipline in the 1970's, when it became clear that teachers are deeply involved in making important decisions within the classroom, as they continuously plan, implement, and assess their teaching strategies (Blömeke et al. 2022; Hattie 2003).

Borg (2015: 35) describes teacher cognition as complex, dynamic, and often unconscious. It is complex because of the various types of knowledge that teachers possess, ranging from societal and intercultural understanding (macro level) to insights into the national educational context (meso level), and the specific local institution where teachers work (micro level). In addition to factual knowledge, teachers possess both general and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge, acquired through education and practice. For language teachers in particular, this includes proficiency in the language they teach, as well as an understanding of their target language's historical, cultural, and social contexts. All of this makes up their *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman 1986).

Teachers' knowledge interacts with their beliefs, which are their personal convictions about teaching, learning, and their roles as educators (Fives & Buehl 2012). These beliefs, deeply influenced by social and cultural norms (Kubanyiova 2018), lived language experiences (Busch 2017), and personal aspirations or fears (Kubanyiova 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Pitkänen-Huhta 2020), do not always align with research-based knowledge and can act as filters in connection with intake from teacher education (Borg 2006). However, teacher beliefs are not static; they evolve throughout a teacher's career, as a teacher's own classroom practice influences cognition and is also influenced by it, among other things, through reflection. Beliefs about self-efficacy, i.e., confidence in own knowledge and abilities, also play a significant role (Bandura 1994). Teachers with low self-efficacy may avoid certain topics, such as aspects of interculturality, if they lack confidence in addressing student questions (Borg 2015).

4.1. Teacher cognition and intercultural (communicative) competence

In the field of language teacher cognition research, scholars have explored a variety of topics related to language teaching and learning, ranging from grammar instruction (perhaps the most thoroughly explored area) to literacy, oral communication, plurilingual education, feedback, differentiation, and many others. Our own focus of interest, intercultural competence, has also received attention both internationally (e.g., Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. 2003; Sercu 2005; Jedynak 2011; Young & Sachdev 2011; Xiaohui & Li 2011; Koike & Lacorte 2014; Oranje & Smith 2018; Yang et al. 2018; Safa & Tofighi 2022) and in Denmark (e.g., Gregersen 2007; Fernández 2015; Svarstad 2016; Pettersson 2019; Löbl 2022; Larsen 2024).

Many of these numerous studies on teacher beliefs and practices show that teaching IC in language classrooms is not realized as often as it should be, as often as teachers would like it to be, or in the way that literature recommends. In general, both the international and Danish studies indicate that teachers are aware of the importance of promoting IC in the context of language learning, but that they experience several obstacles that prevent them from paying as much attention to this aspect of language learning as they would like. Studies exploring this lack cite the "vastness of the concept of culture", "lack of resources", "pedagogical problems" (such as what teaching strategies to use and how to program lessons), teachers' feelings of low self-efficacy regarding knowledge of the target cultures, a reluctance to take up certain topics in class which could be potentially sensitive for some learners, and a "lack of focus on ICC in teacher training" (Hermessi 2016) as some of the main reasons why IC is marginalized in language classrooms. Oranje & Smith (2018) point out that, while these reasons do emerge repeatedly, hidden behind them is the fact that teachers are not supported to transform their knowledge about IC into something that they can act on in classroom practice.

Even though studies on IC and teacher beliefs are not rare, there is no existing work about the context of our investigation – teachers of Danish as a second language for adult migrants. As mentioned in the introduction, second language teaching in the context of migration, and particularly

regarding languages other than English, has been the target of very little research (Ushioda 2017). The very few existing studies differ significantly from our study in context and focus, as they center on migrant students in primary and/or secondary school settings (see, e.g., Brookie 2016; Obondo et al. 2016; Rosnes & Rossland 2018; Simopoulos & Magos 2020).

5. Method and data

In the present study, which can be defined as mixed-method, we use a combination of data collection instruments in order to shed as much light as possible over DSL-teachers' thoughts and practices regarding the promotion of intercultural competence among adult migrant learners in Denmark.

The study includes a questionnaire for DSL teachers, which has received 93 responses, classroom observations, and interviews with nine DSL teachers. The questionnaire was sent electronically to the leaders of all Danish language schools in Denmark and then distributed to the teachers by the school leaders. The responses were collected between May and August 2023.

In selecting participants for observations, emphasis was placed on ensuring representation across all DU lines and levels. The observer (author 1) took on a non-participant role, focusing on making field notes using a semi-structured observation chart (O'Leary 2010) with the possibility to note time, teacher and student actions, as well as the teaching materials used. Since the teacher is considered the key actor in this study, the observation results presented here focus on the teacher. Classroom observation was selected because it is widely regarded as the most direct approach for examining teachers' instructional skills (OECD 2018).

To gain insights into the teachers' beliefs, evaluations, and perceived practices after the observations, semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014) were conducted with each observed teacher. An interview guide was developed and used for this purpose. The interviews and observations were conducted between 5th October 2023 and 7th May 2024. The interviews and the survey were conducted in Danish and transcribed immediately after recording. The quotations presented in this paper were translated from Danish into English by the authors. The quotations from the questionnaire are marked as "survey response"; those from the interviews are marked with the line and level that the teacher teaches, e.g., "DU3/M4" (i.e., Danish Education 3, module 4).

The table below shows the modules that have been observed, the amount and duration of observations, and the duration of the teacher interviews. Each of the observed modules was taught by a different teacher.

Table 1. Overview of data collection

Danish line and level	**Observations**	**Interviews (minutes)**
DU1/Mixed	3 x 2hr 30min	1hr 24min
DU1/M1-2	3 x 2hr 30min	1hr 9min
DU1/M2-4	4 x 4hr 30min	1hr 47min
DU2/M1-2	4 x 2hr 30min	51min
DU2/M3-4	4 x 2hr 30min	40min
DU2/M5-6	4 x 2hr 30min	1hr 4min
DU3/M1-2	4 x 2hr 30min	48min
DU3/M4	4 x 2hr 30min	51min
DU3/M5	4 x 2hr 30min	1hr 1min
Total	93hr	9hr 35min

The data underwent content analysis using a combination of inductive and deductive coding (David & Sutton 2004: 205). The coding was carried out independently by two of the authors and

subsequently discussed.

The teachers participating in the interviews are native speakers of Danish. In the table below, an overview of background data for the 9 participating teachers is provided. The table shows that the educational background of the participating teachers is varied, but that they all hold a degree in Danish as a second language or an equivalent qualification.

Table 2. Overview of education and experience

DU Level	**Education**	**Experience as a DSL-teacher (years)**
DU3/M4	Master's in Linguistics and European Studies Ph.D. Teaching degree in Danish as a second language	7 + Danish lecturer for 6 years
DU3/M5	Master's in Nordic Language and Literature, History, and Philosophy Teaching degree in Danish as a second language	20
DU2/M5-6	Master's in Social Studies and Russian Primary school teacher in Danish and English No teaching degree in Danish as a second language (because it did not exist at the time), instead completed various courses, including a three-week intensive course FVU-education (Preparatory Adult Education) Certification as a dyslexia teacher for adults (from VIA University College)	28
DU1/Mixed	Master's in Music and Nordic Studies Teaching degree in Danish as a second language Certification as a dyslexia teacher for adults (from VIA University College) Teacher training for high school (*pædagogikum*)	21
DU1/M1-2	Master's in English and Danish Currently completing a teaching degree in Danish as a second language	4
DU1/M2-4	Qualified primary school teacher (subjects: Danish, English, and Music) International hotel and restaurant management education FVU-education (Preparatory Adult Education) Teaching degree in Danish as a second language	9.5
DU3/M2 (online)	Master's in English and Philosophy Teaching degree in Danish as a second language	10
DU2/M1-2	Master's in Religion and Social Studies (Propaedeutics in Latin) Currently completing a teaching degree in Danish as a second language	1.5
DU2/M3-4	Bachelor's in Arabic and Islamic Studies and Sociology Master's in Psychology and Cultural Studies Currently completing a teaching degree in Danish as a second language	1.5 + 9 months of experience teaching DSL at an asylum center

The teacher participants gave their written consent to participate in the study. They were assured anonymity and the possibility of withdrawing their consent at any time.

6. Results

The results are presented to address four main questions: 1) How do teachers conceptualize IC? 2) How do they value IC? 3) How do they describe their IC practice? and 4) How does the way that teachers conceptualize and value IC relate to their classroom practices?

6.1. How do teachers conceptualize IC?

Many of the participating teachers demonstrate a relatively broad understanding of IC. Although they describe it in slightly different ways, they consistently emphasize the same core values and identify IC as involving sensitivity and openness towards other people and cultures. This includes being observant, curious, and engaging in an exchange of perspectives. One teacher explains:

> It is a sensitivity towards not viewing or experiencing the world in the same way... What we take for granted and express in words may hold no meaning or something entirely different to someone from another part of the world. (DU3/M4)

Another teacher reflects:

> The fact that you are open to the idea that things can be different is, I believe, the most important aspect. (DU3/M2)

Moreover, they state the significance of respecting and acknowledging different people, identities, and cultures. One teacher emphasizes:

> It has a lot to do with cultural acknowledgement. I make an effort to recognize the person and identity of the learners. (DU1/M1-2)

This sensitivity and openness foster self-reflection on one's own culture, enabling individuals to view themselves from an external perspective. This awareness allows for the recognition that "we can look at the world in different ways, and both can be equally valid" (DU2/M2-3). Another teacher links this more directly to the students' development of IC, stating:

> Each individual understands both the cultural background they come from and the culture they find themselves in. And in some way, they acquire competencies to navigate within a field that encompasses multiple cultures. (DU1/Mixed)

As an extension of this, it is also emphasized that IC involves recognizing that there is no singular culture; rather, there are multiple cultures, all of which are dynamic and subject to change over time. Some teachers advocate focusing on the individual rather than reducing them to their cultural background. Hence, IC requires "avoiding generalization" (DU2/M5-6) and being "flexible" (DU2/M3-4) in one's understanding of people, cultures, and situations.

The participating teachers frequently define IC by what it is not. It stands in opposition to concepts such as "normativity" (DU3/M4), "monoculture" (DU3/M5), "hegemonic views" (DU3/M5), "stereotyping" (DU3/M4), "assimilation" (DU2/M3-4), "generalization" (DU2/M5-6), and "preaching" (DU3/M5). As one teacher states:

> I see it as a goal that they should be able to navigate some aspects of Danish culture, but not necessarily become culturally Danish. In other words, one can learn Danish without adopting Danish culture. (DU3/M5)

Another teacher adds: "We shouldn't preach a new way of looking at things" (DU2/M5-6). Additionally, it is pointed out that they try to avoid generalizing when discussing Danish conditions:

> I am aware that I must not teach what Danishness is, because I think it is a problem if I stand in front of a foreigner and say: this is how it is in Denmark. (DU3/M5)

Moreover, some of the teachers emphasize a linguistic dimension of IC, often linking it to the concept of translanguaging (García & Li 2014). One teacher explains:

> I think intercultural teaching is just as much about what I have been working with in translanguaging – this idea of creating space for languages to be interconnected, rather than treating them as isolated units. (DU1/M1-2)

It is often unclear whether the teachers are discussing their own IC and how these competences influence their teaching, or whether they view IC as something they impart to their students. This ambiguity likely arises from the overlap between these perspectives: IC can be both a tool teachers use in their professional interactions and a competence they aim to foster in their students.

In this respect, the participating teachers frequently emphasize that IC is an essential skill for them to possess and apply in their own classroom interactions. For instance, when asked how IC is practiced in the classroom, one teacher responded:

> I engage in dialogue about my own culture and the many cultures present in the classroom. I reflect and remain curious. (Survey response)

Here, the teacher describes her own personal IC rather than detailing how students are encouraged to participate in intercultural dialogue and reflection. Some teachers also mention that personal experiences – such as living abroad, having family in another country, or being a foreigner in Denmark – have contributed to the development of their own IC:

> I studied intercultural competence as part of my degree in Danish as a foreign and second language, and I also have 20 years of experience as a Dane living abroad. (Survey response)

> I have personally lived abroad for more than 20 years, so I can easily relate to my students and their efforts to understand a new culture. I 'know' their challenges and, to some extent, also view Denmark through an 'intercultural' lens. (Survey response)

> I have family in Egypt, so I understand that there are other ways of doing things and other ways of thinking about things than the way we do them here. (DU3/M2)

This suggests that the teachers' answers regarding IC may be more about their own competence than explicitly developing IC among students.

As mentioned in the introduction, these teachers demonstrate a relatively broad understanding of IC. However, it is worth noting that some teachers express a need for a clearer definition of IC or convey uncertainty about its meaning. One teacher states:

> I'm not sure I understand what is meant by 'intercultural competence'. (Survey response)

Another comments:

> Next time, please define intercultural competence, as it can have multiple meanings. (Survey response)

A third teacher notes:

> 'Intercultural competence' sounds very sophisticated. I'm not even sure if I can teach it. (Survey response)

This creates a mixed picture, although our data suggests that the majority of teachers do, in fact, have a relatively well-developed understanding of IC.

Having explored the teachers' understanding of IC and their reflections on their own IC, we now turn to the teachers' evaluation of the concept.

6.2. How do teachers value IC?

The data shows that teachers consistently value the teaching of IC positively. In doing so, they highlight several key aspects. First, it is emphasized that IC is important simply because it "is a very important topic for the students" (Survey response). This aligns with teachers' statements that IC helps engage students and motivates them to learn both the language and cultural nuances more effectively:

> Just as important is also being able to spark some enthusiasm in them or some curiosity because this also creates motivation to learn and understand. (DU2/M3-4)

One teacher further elaborates:

> [IC] is such an obvious way to be in the process of learning languages because together you can explore different things. (DU2/M5-6)

Additionally, teachers suggest that a stronger focus on IC can ease learners' integration into Danish society:

> [IC] is so extremely important in relation to integration. The language school is an entry point on so many levels to large parts of society, both in terms of learning Danish and acquiring a vocabulary … but also in terms of gaining cultural insight into how it all works. (DU2/M1-2)

Another teacher highlights how IC addresses insecurities that might hold learners back:

> People can walk around and be extremely afraid of making a faux pas, and therefore you might hold back. (DU3/M4)

Furthermore, teachers feel that understanding cultural differences fosters an acknowledgement of learners' identities, helping them feel valued as individuals:

> [IC] is enormously important for the experience of being acknowledged as a person. (DU3/M5)

On a related note, another teacher points out that IC promotes intercultural tolerance:

> It is important in the sense that intercultural competence also includes intercultural tolerance. That's really my main point. We should all be able to be here, regardless of how we look, and honestly, I don't care what someone wears – I'm not just thinking about Arabic head coverings, but also other headwear from different cultures and things like that. It shouldn't matter. I feel there's a lot of pressure to hide one's culture. (DU1/M1-2)

The teaching of IC is also recognized as a tool for rapport building. One teacher suggests that IC helps learners protect themselves from social missteps while also learning how to make positive impressions:

> I think we [teachers] owe it to them [the learners] to protect them against loss of face but also to show them how they can earn some easy points by being polite so that Danes think: 'Oh, that was a nice man'. (DU1/M1-2)

The same teacher describes the classroom as a place where learners can practice these skills:

> We are such a boot camp, a training camp, a playpen for real life… Not every Mr. and Mrs. Denmark is equally … educational… There could be some slightly more abrupt encounters out there. (DU1/M1-2).

Finally, teachers believe that including IC in lessons enhances learning outcomes. One teacher explains that starting from familiar cultural concepts helps build bridges to new knowledge:

> Because it's smart in terms of learning to start from something known, which you then build on to something that is still not known… It's scaffolding, building up from something instead of just stating: 'this is how it is in Denmark'. (DU3/M5)

Another teacher adds:

> I think it would give them another hook, an anchoring point for both the words and structures we are trying to teach them, if you can attach them to a conversation about what we use it for and what they have, what they could use it for in their language. (DU1/Mixed).

A third teacher says:

> You have something ... you can compare with, so you don't just start from scratch ... You suddenly get a context you can speak from. You get ... a scaffolding you can sort of tie something else up on or compare with. So, the fact that they can speak from something they know and put it in relation to something that is unknown or different, that, I think, is a huge advantage. (DU1/M2-4)

Thus, the participating teachers see advantages in teaching IC both because it overlaps with and promotes core values of tolerance and understanding but also on a more pedagogical level, as IC in their perception creates engagement and supports learning because of the coherence-creating potential inherent in the concept. The teachers also demonstrate a rather holistic view, discussing how it can support integration into the Danish society. From these responses, we can say that in addition to having a well-developed theoretical understanding of IC, teachers also see value in including IC in their classroom practice. But how do they *implement* this understanding and appreciation in their practice? In the next section, we will examine teachers' descriptions of their practices, including the roles of textbooks, learners, and teachers, and the challenges they encounter. Following this, we compare these self-reported practices with observational data.

6.3. How do teachers describe their IC practice?

Despite appreciating and having a well-developed understanding of IC, teachers do not seem particularly conscious or systematic in integrating it into their teaching practice. Some examples of how this is expressed in interviews and survey answers include:

> I don't believe I teach specifically about intercultural competence. However, we do touch upon how things are done in Denmark versus in the students' home countries, and we discuss attitudes. (Survey response)

> I don't think I incorporate it into the actual planning of my teaching. (DU3/M4)

> I think intercultural aspects come into play because we are in a space where many different cultures are represented, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute. (DU2/M3-4)

> I also believe that a lot of learning happens, even if it's not the explicit focus ... much of it occurs unconsciously, in a way. (DU2/M1-2)

> Comparison is something that happens almost automatically. (DU2/M5-6)

> Since so many different cultures are represented, it happens naturally—it's not something I plan for. (Survey response)

Thus, according to the teachers' own statements, IC is not an explicit focus in their instruction. Instead, it tends to emerge spontaneously and somewhat automatically due to the presence of diverse cultures within the classroom, and it is reduced to comparison.

6.3.1. The role of textbooks and topics

From the data, it becomes clear that the inclusion of IC in the classroom is largely dependent on the textbooks used. In the survey, 65% responded that they often use textbooks when teaching IC, and 20% indicated that they sometimes do. Compared to other resources, textbooks are by far the most used material. This point is also clearly reflected in both the interviews and the qualitative responses in the survey:

> It is rarely a focus in my teaching and will often arise from the textbook I am already using. (Survey response)

> The reason for choosing that text is that it's in the book. In that sense, it's quite pragmatic. (DU3/M4)

Interestingly, the teachers seem to appreciate the materials they work with, particularly for their ability to foster intercultural dialogue. 97% of respondents indicate that the teaching materials are either very suitable, adequately suitable, or somewhat suitable, while only 3% report that they are unsuitable. The same book series are highlighted multiple times in both the interviews and the survey. For example, the book series *Fokus* and *Puls* are described as follows (for a more detailed look at the teaching materials, see Sadow et al. ms.):

> The 'Fokus' series works really well because it prompts questions like 'How is it in your home country?' (DU2/M3-4)

> One of the materials I really like to use is something I find invites intercultural conversation and understanding. It doesn't just discuss what happens in Denmark but promotes a broader dialogue. This material, called 'Puls', does this well. (DU3/M4)

As we shall see in section 6.3.5, DU1 stands out due to the significantly weaker educational starting point of this group of learners. Nevertheless, a DU1 teacher also notes that "the themes we work with automatically include this [comparison], such as 'my school', 'in my home country'". However, she also adds: "But there are just as many themes that don't encourage this [comparison]", to which she reflects: "It's certainly something I need to consider more moving forward, to ensure I bring their experiences into the room" (DU1/M2-4).

However, there are no examples which go beyond this idea of encouraging students to compare their own cultures with "Danish culture". This limit is also demonstrated in the interviews:

> We have an overall theme and some texts, and then there will be something asking you to compare it with your home country. So, there is a lot of material that does that, but it is not the starting point. (DU2/M5-6)

6.3.2. The role of the learner

In addition to prompts from the teaching materials, the inclusion of IC in the classroom also relies on learners' actions and engagement. Teachers often highlight the role of student-initiated discussions and students' own experiences in facilitating intercultural dialogue. For example, a couple of teachers note:

> Input from the students is probably the most important 'material' I use. (Survey response)

> These kinds of discussions … come into play when students ask questions or share their experiences. I don't need to open these comparative discussions because they happen very naturally. (DU3/M5)

Again, DU1 stands out in comparison to the other lines. A DU1 teacher says:

> In fact, I find that it is the Ukrainians who are much better at bringing their own experiences into the room. It is very, very rare that I experience that other DU1 learners do it, it is typically us who have to ask:'How is it in XX' ... In any case, I'm made aware that it's usually me who has to make sure I have that angle. (DU1/M2-4)

From this quote, it appears that many DU1 learners find it challenging to take initiative in sharing own experiences and have a greater need for the teacher's guidance.

Some of the teachers emphasize the underlying advantage of having the students initiate the intercultural focus:

> Students participate in internships and alternate between these and language courses, so I use their descriptions of communication problems from their internships as teaching material. (Survey response)

> To create the most relevant content possible, I base my teaching on student questions and my knowledge of their situations, such as their work environments. This happens continuously. (Survey response)

According to these teachers, a student-centered approach increases relevance, which is beneficial for the learning outcome. In fact, this was highlighted as one of the key values of working with IC in teaching (see 6.2.).

6.3.3. The role of the teacher

Beyond selecting the teaching materials, teachers also actively apply teaching strategies that facilitate the integration of IC in the classroom. The participating teachers appear to be particularly attuned to creating the right conditions for learners to engage in IC. Several teachers emphasize the importance of feeling safe as a key condition for fostering cultural comparison and interaction, and they therefore work to create a safe and supportive classroom environment for learning. A teacher expresses it like this:

> When they are in the classroom, it's important to me to create a safe space where we can laugh together, not at each other, and where there is room for everyone. (DU1/Mixed)

Another teacher says:

> I also create a classroom environment that encourages students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds to embrace and respect each other. (Survey response)

At times, teachers are the primary actors in incorporating IC into the classroom. One teacher describes how they actively introduce IC elements, saying: "Sometimes it can also be something you fill in yourself" (DU3/M4). In this regard, teachers report enhancing the existing teaching materials, e.g., by asking follow-up questions about the students' home countries and thereby creating opportunities for intercultural dialogue. A teacher describes it like this:

> Primarily by facilitating discussions on topics that students are curious about, as well as conversations about how things are done in Denmark compared to their home countries – it is something I often ask about to encourage reflection and awareness of cultural differences. (Survey response)

Another teacher specifies topics that they typically compare:

> We compare differences and similarities in various celebrations – for example, naming ceremonies, coming of age, weddings, funerals, birthdays, and holidays. We look at family structures, housing, gender roles, childhood, old age, celebrations, food, social norms, and leisure activities across different cultures. (Survey response)

They sometimes support this by intentionally grouping students from different nationalities to foster cultural exchange:

> I usually pair them up, and I think it works well when they talk and exchange experiences. I also like to mix them across nationalities because it adds value – it creates those 'aha' moments when they realize, 'Oh, things can be different in other places'. (DU2/M3-4)

Or they initiate intercultural comparison by drawing parallels between different cultures they have knowledge of themselves:

> To me, it [IC] is about making references where I can. It's difficult to do this for all countries, but I aim to create those connections when I'm aware of certain cultural practices. (DU2/M1-2)

Common to the mentioned intercultural dialogue is that it is rooted in Danish traditions, norms, and culture – although teachers often emphasize that there is no singular Danish culture:

> So, when it's about interculture here, it obviously means that foreigners need to learn Danish, and the primary focus is on the Danish language, but with that comes culture as well... It's mainly Danish culture, and then comes the question, what is that exactly? Danish culture? (DU3/M5).

> The focus of the teaching is, of course, to teach the Danish language and Danish culture. That's really the main goal, but it can also be interesting to discuss how things are in other places as well. (DU3/M2)

Note again the overwhelming emphasis on comparison as the primary method for including IC in their classrooms.

6.3.4. Five key challenges

Based on the teachers' statements in both surveys and interviews, five main challenges emerge: module tests, lack of time, student skill level, sensitive topics, and teacher training. We will examine these challenges more closely in this section.

The participating teachers seem to prioritize the linguistic aspect over cultural elements. A DU1 teacher reflects on the learning objectives, which focus exclusively on language, while cultural aspects emerge more or less incidentally:

> I must say that the objectives we most often formulate or use ourselves are typically the linguistic ones. For example, at both the day level and the course level, I can say: 'Well, what language is to be learned here?' … And I don't think we've been very good at being clear about the cultural aspect, to be completely honest (DU1/M2-4).

This prioritization seems to be due to the module tests, as students are not assessed on their IC. This, coupled with the fact that schools receive financial compensation from the state only when students successfully pass these assessments, creates a pressure on teachers to prioritize "teaching to the test", causing IC to be relegated to a secondary position. This is reflected in several of the teachers' statements:

> It [IC] has no role whatsoever in the module test world. (DU3/M4)

> One could say that regardless of what I want to teach and what the books suggest, it is the final exams, as well as the module tests, that dictate our teaching. (DU3/M5)

> If there were a bit more time in the classroom and less focus on these tests, there is no doubt that intercultural competence would play a larger role... right now, it is more like we shut it down because we also need to discuss reading strategies, and we have to prepare for that [the module test]. (DU2/M5-6)

The challenge of exams is – as it is evident in the last quote – closely related to the second issue, which is the lack of sufficient time. The teachers express concerns about the very limited teaching time, which, combined with the pressure from the module tests, severely restricts the incorporation of IC into their lessons, despite their recognition of IC's importance for learners. Some experienced teachers reflect on how things were different in the past:

> There is rarely time for it because it's like an extra layer… And it has gotten much worse over the last five to ten years, where students now receive half the teaching hours they used to have. (DU1/Mixed)

> In earlier Danish lessons, when we had a bit more time, we often did projects and things like that. (DU3/M4)

> I used to organize several excursions to places... I still try to fit in one or two during a whole course, but there's simply no time or resources for more than that. (Survey response)

Another aspect of the time pressure relates to lesson preparation. Teachers often lack sufficient preparation time, which increases their reliance on textbooks:

> I'm also somewhat limited by the textbook material I have, because I don't have the time to reinvent the wheel. (DU3/M2)

Additionally, teachers feel challenged when teaching IC to students with lower proficiency levels:

> It's difficult at the lower modules, where the primary focus is on basic grammatical structures. (DU2/M1-2)

Some teachers even mention that it is not meaningful to work with IC at the lower levels:

> Many of the above questions are touched upon in teaching at a concrete level, based on the students' attitudes and experiences. In my experience, you need to be at the higher language levels for it to make sense to address general questions – at least if it is to be conducted in Danish. (Survey response)

While lower-level modules generally pose challenges, DU1 is highlighted as particularly problematic due to the very low linguistic and cognitive levels of the students:

> Most of my teaching is at module 2 and module 3, and I find that the students currently lack the linguistic resources to engage with these topics. (Survey response)

> It is incredibly difficult because, at this level, it's all about peeling away and simplifying until you reach something very basic. (DU1/Mixed)

> Not everyone has the necessary language competence or ability to think abstractly enough to engage with language in this way. However, I'm always proud of my DU1 students who sometimes simply ask, 'Why aren't you married?', which allows me to explain that I haven't 'found a man' or that I'm a 'strong woman' who loves living alone. (Survey response)

One teacher directly links this issue to the availability of resources:

> I don't have any resources for the intro modules. (Survey response)

Additionally, it appears that some teachers tend to avoid topics that can be considered problematic or sensitive. A teacher mentioned having addressed topics like "religion, cultural differences, etc.",

but found that these could create a "hostile atmosphere among the students" (Survey response). As a result, the teacher has for years "avoided these topics, as the school should be a positive place where everyone feels safe and comfortable" (Survey response).

Moreover, a concern is raised in relation to the students' existing stereotypical perceptions of Danes, on the one hand, and their requests for simplified portrayals or stereotypes from their teachers, on the other. The students, with good intentions, seek these stereotypes as a way to better understand the topics dealt with in class and navigate their learning experience, but this can be problematic:

> Stereotypes are something you need to be careful with, in my opinion. On the other hand, they make it easier for the students to form these mental images to create some kind of pre-understanding of the topics covered in class. But I try as much as possible to remain neutral from both sides. (Survey response)

The discussion of stereotypes Danes might have about the students and their home countries is also seen as problematic:

> It's difficult to bring up the stereotypes Danes have about the students' cultures/countries because it can offend some. But you can tactfully try to prepare the students for the opinions they will encounter in the media. (Survey response)

The teachers' educational background appears to present a challenge, as the approach to IC in their teacher training is not practice-oriented. In the survey, 63% of the teachers indicated that they had learned about IC in one module of their DSL teacher education. While they found the module interesting, they criticized it for being overly theoretical:

> You can certainly criticize it – it was a very theoretical education. (DU3/M5)

> It felt more like a university subject ... there was no connection between the university teaching and the practical classroom teaching. (DU3/M2)

> I found it to be very university-oriented, theory-heavy, and full of concepts that weren't particularly relevant to a teacher's everyday life. There were some things I could use, but a lot of it I didn't find applicable. (DU1/Mixed)

After having focused on the teachers' perspectives on IC, we proceed to examine how these views are reflected in their classroom practices as observed during lessons.

6.4. How does the way that teachers conceptualize and value IC relate to their classroom practices?
The section is divided into several key topics: topic-led IC, teaching to the test, handling generalizations and stereotypes, and comparing languages. As will become evident from the following, there is a significant alignment between what the teachers say and what they do.

6.4.1. Topic-led IC
In accordance with what the participating teachers describe in their statements, our observations show that it is often the topics covered in class that encourage comparisons with the students' own cultures – particularly when they are asked to express their opinions and argue for those opinions. As it is to be expected, the students draw on personal experiences in these discussions. For example, during a lesson in DU3/M4, the students read a text about a woman who has actively chosen to become a single mother by having a child with a sperm donor. The students were first asked to discuss: "*What do you think about choosing to become a solo mother?".* During this discussion, the

students also talked about adoption and its prevalence in Denmark, as well as LGBT+ issues and rainbow families. Subsequently, they were given a similar written assignment as homework: "*You must write what you think about Susanne's choice and explain why you think so".* In the homework, the teacher determined the focus on the expression of opinion and argumentation. In the textbook, there are several questions of this kind, and the teacher's question can be seen as an adaptation of one presented in the book. In one of the subsequent lessons, the students were assigned a written task based on an interview they were to conduct with a Dane about family-related matters that had puzzled them. The teacher provided examples, such as how elderly people live, e.g., in multigenerational homes versus nursing homes (as is customary in Denmark), or child-rearing. She referenced her own experience during a stay abroad, where she observed that Czech children were better behaved than Danish children. She illustrated her own daughter's attitude and her husband's parenting style by recounting a story about her teenage daughter wearing a T-shirt that said: "I WANT PIZZA, NOT YOUR OPINION" (DU3/M4). With this, the teacher aimed to illustrate her own experience of Danish child-rearing practices, in which children are part of a rather flat hierarchy in the home and can therefore feel entitled to disregard adult advice. In the subsequent interview, the learners also brought up this example and described their surprise at what they perceived as a lack of respect from the child towards her parents. One learner explained:

> Okay, for example, children don't listen to their parents when they say, for example, 'do this, do that'. It is normal in Iran … For example, I just have to say to my son, 'wear this t-shirt', and he would say 'okay mommy' … What did C say: 'I want pizza not your opinion'? (DU3/M4 learner)

This example highlights the learners' perception of the greater autonomy children have in Denmark and their astonishment at the differences in expected respect and obedience.

The observations confirm that DU1 and the lower modules stand out, as we found extremely limited examples of IC-related episodes. However, there are a few notable instances.

For example, a DU1 teacher took students, primarily attending Module 4 (DU1 classes often consist of mixed groups due to the low number of students), on an excursion to a kindergarten. In the subsequent lesson, they discussed in simple Danish both their experience with childcare in the specific kindergarten and their knowledge of similar practices, including those from their home countries.

6.4.2. Teaching to the test

The observations further corroborate the teachers' statements regarding the significant influence of module tests on the teaching process. These tests evidently occupy a central position for both educators and learners, frequently shaping the content and structure of lessons. They are addressed in nearly every session, either due to student inquiries about scheduling and other practicalities or as part of preparation activities, such as practicing with previous test materials. This was most apparent in DU1. It was also observed that topics do not necessarily lead to cultural comparisons, even when dealing with controversial subjects such as stress and gender equality, which would seem a perfect occasion. In addition, as some teachers describe in the interviews, it was observed that they sometimes shut down the cultural discussion and focus on what is essential to pass the module test.

6.4.3. Handling generalizations and stereotypes

Some teachers place significant emphasis on contextualizing and being cautious about producing or reproducing stereotypes and prejudices – which is also emphasized by the teachers when defining IC. For example, one DU3/M5 teacher states: "*We must be careful when giving examples to ensure that we don't end up creating stereotypes".* This teacher writes "*stereotypes = all"* on the board and

explains that it refers to statements implying that everyone is the same, such as "*all Danes are closed-off and reserved"*. Other observed teachers refrain from commenting on the generalizations made by the students and/or inadvertently generalize based on their own experiences.

6.4.4. Comparing languages (and cultures)

The observations confirm that teachers make comparisons with other languages, but we have not found as many instances of comparisons regarding specific cultural practices related to these languages. The observed comparisons are grammatical in nature and often with English, which is typically the language most familiar to the teachers, but examples of the inclusion of German and French were also observed. Furthermore, teachers encouraged students to reflect on a given grammatical phenomenon in their own native languages if the teacher lacked knowledge of those languages. For instance, in DU3/M2, a student asked about the difference between "*du"* and "*man"*. The teacher compared this with English, where she said both are translated as "*you"*. She also explained the other Danish pronouns that translate to "*you"* and added: *"I know many of your languages have this distinction as well"*. In DU2/M5-6, a teacher covered modal verbs and how hypothetical situations are expressed in Danish. She provided an example: *"If I won a million [Danish crowns], I would buy a house"*. Then she added: "I think if you think about your language, you probably have the same structure. For example, what would you say in Thai, if you were to translate: *'If I won a million, I would travel to Thailand again'"*. In this way, she helped the students make the comparison themselves.

7. Discussion and implications

Many of the participating teachers demonstrate a broad understanding of IC, which closely aligns with Byram's (1997, 2021) conceptualization of the term. They emphasize the importance of sensitivity and curiosity, highlight that there is no single, static culture – rather, culture is dynamic – and stress that it is ultimately individuals, not cultures, that interact. The teachers are careful to avoid generalizations and consistently frame their comments in class in a specific context, in line with research on the topic (e.g., Byram 1997, 2021; Risager & Svarstad 2020). Much like Byram rejects the native speaker model, these teachers distance themselves from assimilation. Instead, they believe that students should learn to understand and navigate Danish society while having the skills to negotiate it in the context of their own.

Issues related to lack of self-efficacy (Bandura 1994) are scarce in the data, both in relation to the meaning and significance of IC and in terms of familiarity with Danish society (i.e., content-specific self-efficacy). This contrasts with findings from other studies (cf. Hermessi 2016). However, this is not surprising, given that most of these teachers have formal education in language teaching and are native speakers of the target language and/or have lived in Denmark for many years, gaining deep immersion in the culture. On the other hand, given the teachers' familiarity with IC, we would have expected more expressions of self-efficacy when talking about how they teach it. Instead, it is clear that some teachers avoid it for reasons of student comfort or time constraints. This indicates that they are not confident in integrating it into their current practice (see below).

As previous studies have also noted (cf. Hermessi 2016), these teachers recognize the critical importance of including activities that enhance IC. They observe that this helps engage students and motivates them to learn both the language and cultural nuances more effectively. It fosters tolerance and acknowledgment, serves as a tool for rapport-building, and is pedagogically relevant. From the teachers' perspective, working with culture and interculturality enhances engagement, establishes connections to learners' existing knowledge and, ultimately, can also aid integration into Danish society.

Given these perspectives, it may seem surprising that both teacher statements and observations indicate that IC is not a systematic focus in their classrooms. Furthermore, IC is largely limited to

noticing and comparing – this includes comparisons of both societal and linguistic aspects (e.g., translanguaging). If we compare this practice to Risager & Svarstad's (2020) cycle of intercultural learning (mentioned in section 3), it seems that teachers operate primarily within the first two levels (noticing and comparing) and only rarely proceed to the stages of reflecting and interacting (with the exception of the homework about the solo mother in 6.4.1). This is partly due to module tests and curricula that prioritize the Danish language. With limited instructional time, teachers are compelled to focus on elements critical for passing module tests – essentially teaching to the test. Other Danish studies regarding foreign languages in the school system have shown similar results (e.g., Fernández 2015; Andersen & Fernández 2022), and the same applies international studies like Young & Sachdev (2011).

Moreover, while the teachers in the interviews emphasize the importance of openness, curiosity, and reflectivity and stress that it is individuals rather than cultures that interact in practice, they nevertheless, at times, seem to overlook this. This is evident both in their teaching practice and in the interviews, when they describe classroom situations in which they ask questions such as "How is it in your country?". This question takes for granted that the learners are representatives of "a country" or "a culture", when they may not perceive themselves as representatives of a single culture, but rather as individuals embedded in subcultural or transcultural networks – often more than one at the same time. Openness and reflectivity require critical reflection on an individual's position within their "own" cultures, since this cannot be assumed. Yet the teachers do not always show this level of reflection.

In their practice, at times, it appears that IC equals avoidance of cultural diversity rather than its positive acknowledgment. This is, for example, manifested in the teacher statements in section 6.2., "It shouldn't matter", and in section 6.3.4., "I try … to remain neutral". Similarly, the exercise in section 6.4.1, in which students are asked to express "what they think" about a person's behavior, illustrates that cultural differences are treated as objects of evaluation. Intercultural competence might instead be fostered through an empathetic approach, focusing not on expressing opinions but on trying to adopt another person's perspective, i.e., as an exercise in decentering.

The teachers point out that their training has been overly theoretical, a critique that echoes previous studies (cf. Simopoulos & Magos 2020; Oranje & Smith 2018; Fernández 2015). While their education enables them to explain the concept of IC, it does not equip them with practical tools to apply it in the classroom. This lack of practical preparation might also explain why it is often unclear in both the questionnaire and the interviews whether teachers are discussing their own IC or that of their students. Similar conclusions are reached in studies around the world (e.g., Safa & Tofighi 2022; Jedynak 2011).

Another obstacle teachers identify is the students' low language proficiency level. This seems paradoxical, as they regard IC as a pedagogical tool for scaffolding learning. Perhaps lower-level learners are precisely the ones who could benefit most from systematic work with IC. This again underscores the need for teacher training that supports the implementation of IC at all proficiency levels. One way of addressing this challenge is to train learners to express themselves in simple terms, for example through the minimal languages approach (see Fernández & Sadow 2025). Another way of integrating intercultural competence at an early stage is to allow learners to reflect and articulate their thoughts in their first language, in another language in which they feel more confident than Danish, or by translanguaging (García & Li Wei 2014). These flexible language practices can support the learning of Danish in the longer term.

These findings point to a need for changes in module tests – a process already underway, as portfolio exams will soon be introduced in DU1. Additionally, modifying teacher education to include more practice-oriented perspectives would prove beneficial.

Our findings, along with insights from our learner cognition study (submitted) and our materials analysis study (in preparation), support our aim to develop an online learning resource focused on

Danish communicative culture – covering cultural keywords, social values, and everyday conversation routines – adaptable across programs and proficiency levels. The rationale behind our online resource draws on the minimal languages approach (Goddard 2017), where complex issues are described using very basic linguistic means. In the resource, we call this minimal language "stepping-stone Danish", as it is conceived as a metalanguage that supports learners in their progression towards acquiring Danish. Furthermore, the online resource includes teaching materials designed to encourage critical reflection. The aim is to avoid perpetuating a static and monolithic representation of culture. We have deliberately included potentially problematic cultural issues to avoid a tendency in teaching materials to focus only on topics where Danish culture is presented as progressive (e.g., single mothers, LGBT+ issues). For instance, we highlight the contradictions in Denmark's self-image as an environmentally progressive country alongside its high levels of consumption or the love for Denmark that can easily border on excessive pride. The results of the present study also highlight the need to help teachers approach IC more systematically, moving from simple comparisons to emphasizing true reflection and interaction. It is also our intention to provide training courses that will help teachers exploit our upcoming learning resource in the Danish classroom, thereby hopefully adopting a more systematic approach to IC.

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Learning by not doing?: Investigating language use dynamics in Danish upper secondary English classes

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Abstract: This small-scale study examines English foreign language (EFL) teaching in Danish upper secondary education (*gymnasium*), investigating the dynamics of language use among pupils in Danish upper secondary English classes. Through direct classroom observations, we explore how pupils engage with the language, particularly focussing on the prevalence of Danish versus English speech. We aim to explore how much English language spoken input upper secondary pupils receive and how much English language output pupils produce. Our findings reveal a notable tendency among pupils to predominantly use Danish during English classes or opting for silence altogether. In terms of input, we found that English is widely used by teachers in class, however, they switch to Danish when teaching grammar. This phenomenon underscores an interplay of cultural, motivational, and personal factors influencing pupil language choice and proficiency development. Our discussion considers the underlying reasons behind this linguistic behaviour, as well as the challenges and implications for language learning and teaching in Danish upper secondary education. Furthermore, we look at similar phenomena in a broader European context. We discuss the potential impact of classroom environment and pupil attitudes on language use patterns, offering insights to enhance English language acquisition and communication skills among pupils. By addressing the observed disparities between language instruction and pupil language output, this study contributes to an understanding of language learning dynamics within the Danish upper secondary context.

Keywords: Classroom interaction, English foreign language (EFL), teaching, language shifts, willingness to communicate (WTC), oral proficiency

1. Introduction

Oral proficiency is an important part of overall language proficiency. Even though much communication takes place in written form and online nowadays, and portable translation solutions (which also work with spoken language) are readily available, language learners will still benefit from oral proficiency training and awareness to build up confidence and fluency. Furthermore, in a Danish context, being orally proficient is essential considering the increasingly globalised labour market and the fact that Denmark is "...usually considered a highly proficient EFL country" (Biancetti 2020: 70). According to H. Andersen (2020: 596), pupils in Danish upper secondary school (*gymnasium*) are motivated to use their spoken language, in particular when the learning tasks are varied. However, light has recently been shed on the challenges teachers face in Danish and Scandinavian foreign language teaching settings with pupils' lack of willingness to engage orally in teaching situations (Holmen 2023; Romme-Mølby 2020). Many things can impact pupils' willingness to engage such as self-confidence, group dynamics, motivation, perceived proficiency, etc; in other words, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can play a role (Lund et al. 2023).

According to the Danish Ministry of Children and Education (n.d., b), the highest level of English in Danish upper secondary schools (termed "English A") corresponds to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level C1. The C1 level is the second highest level, and this level refers to a "proficient user" who can "express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions" (CEFR 2023). In order to improve pupils' oral proficiency (and indeed reach the C1 level), actual use of the spoken language is needed (Det Nationale Center for Fremmedsprog 2023).

Several researchers have investigated topics related to this issue in a Danish context. aus der Wieschen & Sert (2021) investigated divergent language choices between primary school pupils and their English teachers. They observed that the pupils almost exclusively spoke Danish in contrast to the teachers, who primarily spoke English. The researchers argued that this could lead to comprehension problems, as it might be difficult to maintain a mutual understanding of what is going on when a pupil and teacher are speaking different languages. Despite this, the researchers discovered that pupils were more willing to participate if they were allowed to speak Danish in their English lessons (aus der Wieschen & Sert 2021).

Fernández & Andersen (2019) have investigated how oral communication in foreign languages other than English (German, Spanish, and French) is taught in the Danish school system (primary schools, secondary schools, and universities) by analysing and comparing the official curricula. In their study, they argue that while teachers and pupils of all levels of the educational system view oral proficiency as the most crucial component of foreign language learning, it is often neglected in comparison with writing skills (Fernández & Andersen 2019). When examining the official curricula for primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, they found that primary school curricula focused on practising everyday dialogue. However, upper secondary curricula had a stronger focus on information exchanges about social matters, and at university the communication was of academic matters (Fernández & Andersen 2019). Fernández & Andersen (2019) suggested that these showed that dialogue was only taught at primary school level. The tendency is that conversational skills are only taught in primary school, and further educational levels do not build on this but rather move on to different themes.[1] Fernández & Andersen (2019) find this problematic and highlight that the Ministry of Education states that upper secondary schools and universities are co-responsible for the development of this skill.

Initially, the present study aimed to investigate the use of spoken English during grammar teaching in Danish upper secondary school, by presenting a "snapshot" of grammar teaching through observations and interviews. We anticipated that spoken English would be rarely used and that this might contribute to pupils perceiving grammar as difficult, if they are unable to speak about grammar in English. Through observations of 10 classes from 5 different upper secondary schools involving 230 pupils plus interviews with 6 different teachers, we investigated how much Danish and how much English was spoken and explored some of the reasons behind. As expected, it quickly became clear that all grammar we observed was taught in Danish. The observations and interviews suggest that pupils were reluctant to speak English especially during group work, although their teachers encouraged them to speak English, and during grammar lessons both pupils and teachers exclusively spoke Danish. Through the teacher interviews, it was revealed that the teachers found the exam a significant reason for teaching grammar in Danish, as pupils need to answer grammatical questions in Danish using Danish-Latin grammatical terms. Thus, because of the overall lack of grammar teaching in English, we were unable to fully investigate our initial interest, however, this led to an interest in the other dynamics we observed. Therefore, we chose to investigate the students' preferences in regard to learning grammar and whether they perceived grammar as difficult because we believed that this could give us insight into the students' opinions on the language used in grammar teaching scenarios. Additionally, we interviewed the teachers to gain insight into the reasons and thoughts behind teaching grammar in Danish. In addition to the data regarding grammar instruction and preferences, we obtained observations of different types of classroom scenarios, and it became evident that there was a pattern of pupils either opting for silence or speaking Danish rather than English whenever possible. Consequently, we changed the objective of the study to instead attempt to map out what goes on in English classes in Danish upper secondary school regarding the use of

[1] We thank the anonymous reviewer for highlighting this.

English and Danish language. In this way, the study still focuses on grammar teaching, as it stood out because it was mainly taught in Danish. Thus, the article at hand aims to investigate just how much English language spoken input upper secondary pupils receive as well as to explore how much English language output pupils produce. This also entails looking at instances of switching between English and Danish in the English language classroom.

1.1 Danish upper secondary education

In Denmark, there are four types of upper secondary education, which usually comes after compulsory full-time education. Their overall aim is to prepare young people for higher education, but they have slightly different focus areas (general education, technical or mercantile) and three of them are 3-year programmes, and one is a two-year programme. In this paper, we are concerned with the 3-year general preparatory programme also known as stx in Denmark (Ministry of Children and Education n.d., a).

In the Danish upper secondary education programmes, English is a subject which aims to impart knowledge of the English-speaking world as well as linguistic skills. Thus, it is a subject focusing on the English language, both in terms of theoretical aspects such as grammar rules but also usage-based skills such as speaking and writing, as well as English-language texts and literature (literary and media studies) and English-language culture and society (culture studies, social science, and history).

English as a subject is offered at two levels: A and B, A being the highest and the level we are concerned with in this paper. English B-level corresponds to a proficiency level of B2 in the CEFR framework.

According to the curriculum, which is mandated by the Danish Ministry of Children and Education (*læreplan)* (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet 2023: 6, [authors' translation]), "[t]he purpose of the teaching is for the pupils in the English subject to gain the ability to understand and use the English language so that they can orient themselves and act in a globalized and digitized world". Thus, we can see that the focus of the English subject classes is more than simply teaching pupils how to speak English, and so the classes consist of more than simple language instruction.

The examination in English A is a 5-hour written exam in addition to a 30-minute oral exam (examination in an unknown text thematically linked to previously covered material). The written exam is a national test distributed by the Danish Ministry of Children and Education.

The written exam is a digital exam and contains four subtasks that together test the examinee's fulfilment of the academic goals stipulated in the *læreplan*. The first three subtasks are shorter than the last subtask and have a grammatical focus (e.g., identify verb phrases and state the tense, voice, and aspect) and have to be answered in Danish using the Danish version of the Latin grammatical terms (e.g., *substantiv* instead of the English *noun* or the Danish *navneord)*. The fourth subtask is an analytical essay where pupils can write 900-1200 words on either a fiction or a nonfiction text. Videos are also used as material for analysis in the exam and the pupils may use books and notes throughout and they also have access to the internet. They are not allowed to use Google Translate, Grammarly, GAI or other similar aids.

Upper secondary English teachers have access to exams from previous years and a Teacher's Handbook via Prøvebanken.dk, which is a website managed by the Danish Ministry of Children and Education. The handbook contains information on the written exam set as well as good advice on how to train pupils for the written exam. Furthermore, additional materials are available for teachers via the EMU Danish Learning Portal,[2] for instance the article "Good advice for working with writing skills before the exam" (Christensen 2023).

[2] Danmarks læringsportal https://emu.dk/stx/engelsk?b=t6

2. Theory

In this chapter, we first introduce the approach to language teaching prevalent in Denmark. Following this, we outline the distinction made in this paper between two aspects of oral language production, namely, pronunciation and fluency, before accounting for two other factors influencing English language use in Danish classrooms: code-switching and willingness to communicate.

2.1 A communicative stance on language teaching in Denmark

EFL teaching in the Danish school system employs a communicative approach to language teaching, which assumes that language is best learned by communicating (L. Andersen 2020). As such, in EFL classrooms pupils are encouraged to speak English and, in that way, develop their language skills (L. Andersen 2020).

Pedersen (2001) elaborates on the communicative stance on language teaching in Denmark and how it is based on language as communication, i.e., language is viewed as functional and interactional. This means that statements are seen as more than verbs and subjects but also as "language acts". A statement such as "it rains" can, for example, be a language act in the form of an answer to a question, or it can be a warning or an excuse (Pedersen 2001: 2). This view on language impacts how EFL is taught, which Kirkebæk & Ballegaard Hansen (2014) expand on by expressing how pupils' motivation is seen as a determining factor for how well they learn the target language, as well as their opportunity for getting actively involved in the teaching and thereby forming and trying out hypotheses about the target language. This will help the pupils to form a preliminary idea of how the target language works and actively develop their own dynamic interpretation of this in the process of learning the language. This transitional language is referred to as their *interlanguage* (Selinker 2007: 214, 2014: 142). To encourage the development of pupils' interlanguage, teachers must make plans where pupils get the opportunity to use and work with language in a linguistic and communicative sense, and they must be able to continue communication in spite of being less competent in other aspects of the target language, such as grammar, i.e., the main focus would be getting the message across rather than grammatical correctness or pronunciation (Pedersen 2001: 2).

Since the primary focus is on the pupils and the language they produce, it is appropriate to consider how this type of teaching and view on language impacts the pupils. In a report outlining the tendencies and issues found in Danish EFL classrooms, Slåttvik et al. (2020) explain that most teachers across the Danish educational system strive toward making English the classroom language. Based on the answers from questionnaires given to English teachers, Slåttvik et al. (2020) found that this ideal was easier to achieve in higher educational settings while more complicated in the lower educational levels. However, respondents across all educational levels expressed that it was difficult to make pupils speak English in group work settings, which some teachers deemed problematic, while others did not see this as a problem (Slåttvik et al. 2020). While creating a strictly monolingual EFL classroom has pedagogical benefits (L. Andersen 2020), this practice has been heavily debated as the use of the pupils' first language can have a positive influence on language teaching and learning (aus der Wieschen & Sert 2021; L. Andersen 2020; Hall & Cook 2012, Holmen 2023). As such, the practice of using translanguaging, i.e., using two languages in the educational context, could prove beneficial (Williams 2000: 144; Holmen 2023). We return to translanguaging below.

The act of encouraging pupils to speak English in EFL classrooms can be difficult as psychological and social factors can make this performance troublesome. Perceived self-competence, as in the learners' self-assessment of their competence (McCroskey & Richmond 1991), and language anxiety, as in anxiety in relation to using or learning a second language (MacIntyre et al. 1999), have shown to be significant factors that influence whether pupils feel comfortable speaking English in EFL classrooms (L. Andersen 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al. 2019). A study by Fenyvesi et al. (2020) illustrates this by revealing how pupils for whom being proficient in English is a goal can suffer from performance anxiety, which inhibits their participation in class. Similarly, Elahi Shirvan et al. (2019)

correlate EFL pupils' perceived self-competence to their participation in classrooms showing that pupils who feel confident in their language proficiency are more likely to participate in EFL classrooms. Social factors that can further complicate making pupils communicate in English can include social norms among pupils where speaking English is socially unacceptable (L. Andersen 2020). As suggested, several factors can cause EFL pupils to experience discomfort in classroom contexts as a consequence of the communicative approach in the Danish school system.

2.2 Aspects of oral proficiency

Overall, oral proficiency in a foreign language encompasses a variety of competencies such as but not limited to phonetic competence (pronunciation), lexical competence (vocabulary), grammatical competence (including morphology and syntax) and communicative competence. A high competence level across these aspects results in a high degree of fluency, which can be defined as an ability to produce coherent speech which is easily understood by an interlocutor effortlessly and without noticeable hesitations.

As mentioned above, the highest level of English in Danish upper secondary schools (English A) corresponds to the CEFR level C1. According to the guidelines to the curriculum (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet 2023: 6), the final level of pupils taking English A at the end of their 3-year stx programme is in the lower end of the C1 CEFR level.

The core components of CEFR are language competence, activities, and strategies across functions of reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe 2020: 32-33). In terms of communicative language competences, these consist of linguistic competence (which includes general linguistic range, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary control, phonological control, and orthographic control), sociolinguistic competence (which encompasses sociolinguistic appropriateness) and pragmatic competence (which consists of flexibility, turn taking, thematic development, coherence and cohesion, proposition precision and fluency) (Council of Europe 2020: 129, here mentioned in full).

Detailed descriptors are available for the CEFR areas for all levels in the framework (A1-C2), with phonological descriptor scales added in 2020 as the initial scale (from 2001) did not fully reflect the nuanced aspects of phonological progression (Council of Europe 2020: 23, 133).

In terms of specific oral competences, the C1 descriptor for overall phonological control includes the ability to "employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility throughout" (Council of Europe 2020: 134). As for sound articulation, the C1 descriptor includes the ability to "articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language with a high degree of control" and ability to self-correct (Council of Europe 2020: 134). Finally, the descriptor for prosodic features is expressed as the ability to "produce smooth, intelligible spoken discourse with only occasional lapses in control of stress, rhythm and/or intonation, which do not affect intelligibility or effectiveness" as well as the ability to "vary intonation and place stress correctly in order to express precisely what they mean to say" (Council of Europe 2020: 134).

Returning to the Danish upper secondary school context, we saw above that there is an emphasis on the functional approach to language teaching, and, in short, oral proficiency is then seen as best practised through language use in meaningful tasks (Det Nationale Center for Fremmedsprog 2023). In this study, then, we have approached oral proficiency and proficiency training as "language use", in other words as frequency or amount of spoken English (as opposed to Danish or any other language) in the English classroom.

2.3 Code-switching

In EFL classrooms, it occurs that the teacher speaks English while the students answer in their first language (aus der Wieschen & Sert 2021: 109). Such an interaction exemplifies how the *linguistic* code, which is the language actually spoken in the classroom, sometimes differs from the medium of

instruction (aus der Wieschen & Sert 2021: 109). During EFL teaching, teachers and students negotiate the linguistic code, which then leads to instances of *code-switching*. According to Üstünel & Seedhouse (2005), who investigated cases of code-switching in EFL classrooms at a Turkish university, code-switching needs to be understood in the context of the teacher's pedagogical focus and can be teacher-initiated, teacher-induced, or student-initiated. Üstünel & Seedhouse (2005: 305) distinguish between teacher-initiated and teacher-induced depending on whether the teacher "initiates" a code-switch by simply switching to another language or "induces" students to make a code-switch. As such, a teacher-induced code-switch could be the teacher asking a pupil, in English, to translate a sentence into Danish. Contrarily, a teacher-initiated code-switch occurs if the teacher chooses to translate the sentence themselves (the example is based on aus der Wieschen & Sert 2021). Even though L2 is encouraged most of the time in EFL contexts, the pedagogical focus sometimes encourages the use of L1 if the teacher's goal is to get inactive learners to participate. Depending on the teacher's pedagogical focus, the students' language choices may then express alignment or misalignment (Üstünel & Seedhouse 2005: 321). As such, it is important to consider the context of the code-switches, as this can add to the reasoning behind the language alternation, which is best summed up by Üstünel & Seedhouse's (2005: 321) question: "Why that, in that language, right now?". For the purpose of this small-scale study, we will refer to instances where students and teachers speak languages distinct from each other as code-switching, as these interactions can be seen as negotiations surrounding the linguistic code, since the code-switching ultimately results in one language being spoken rather than the other.

2.4 Willingness to communicate in an L2 context

As we saw in section 2.1, several factors can be challenging for EFL pupils while learning, and some of these factors can be comprehended by exploring the concept of *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC), which in the earliest discussions was referred to as unwillingness-to-communicate, e.g., in Burgoon (1976). The union between learning and using a language is essential, according to Larsen-Freeman (2007), who argues that you do not learn something and use it, nor the opposite. "Instead, it is in the using that you learn - they are inseparable" (Larsen-Freeman 2007: 783). This relationship serves as the foundation for the concept WTC in a second language (L2) context.

MacIntyre (2007: 564) defines WTC as "... the probability of speaking when free to do so". In an earlier article, MacIntyre et al. (1998: 546) identify several variables that can affect a pupil's WTC, such as "… [t]he degree of acquaintance between communicators, the number of people present, the formality of the situation, the degree of evaluation of the speaker, [and] the topic of discussion …". MacIntyre et al. (1998: 546) argue that changing the language of communication is likely to affect these variables to a significant degree, as WTC is developed in a first language (L1) context which lacks some of the challenges that an L2 context has. More specifically, MacIntyre et al. (1998: 548) argue that pupils experience a lower degree of WTC in L2 contexts and suggest that language anxiety and motivation are key concepts to consider in this regard. These claims are further corroborated in a meta-analysis of L2 WTC, where Elahi Shirvan et al. (2019: 1248) included 11 studies which "focused on the three high-evidence correlates of L2 WTC defined as perceived communicative competence, anxiety, and motivation".

Elahi Shirvan et al. (2019: 1261) found that there is a significant correlation between L2 WTC, language anxiety, motivation, but also perceived communication competence. However, the studies included in the meta-analysis comprise people learning English in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Turkish contexts. Thus, in a Danish or Scandinavian context the results might differ, or other factors could be significant for L2 WTC since English is taught early in school, and it is typologically close to the Scandinavian languages since they are all part of the Germanic language family.

3. EFL in context

Both in European and non-European contexts, plenty of research has been conducted concerning EFL. However, as a way to limit the scope of the research considered, we will primarily relate our research to studies conducted in Scandinavian and other European contexts. In this section, we have chosen to include Swedish and Norwegian studies as their educational systems and challenges are similar to the Danish context. Furthermore, being neighbouring countries to Denmark their culture, language, and relationship with EFL are also comparable. Finally, we consider an example of the wider European context by including a study from Poland. The study has been chosen as it contains an in-depth analysis of the same topic as this study explores. Although there are significant cultural and linguistic differences between Denmark and Poland, the study shows comparable challenges during EFL teaching.

3.1 EFL in a Scandinavian context

In a Scandinavian context, phonetic competence, and oral assessment, in general, prove to be difficult topics, which Bøhn & Hansen (2017) suggest in a study investigating EFL assessment in upper secondary schools in Norway. Based on the data gathered from 24 interviews and 46 questionnaires, Bøhn & Hansen (2017: 65) concluded that Norwegian upper secondary school EFL teachers had contrasting opinions concerning pronunciation assessment. While the teachers agreed that intelligibility should be the primary concern, their opinions differed in regard to how relevant they deemed nativeness, i.e., sounding like a native speaker of English (Bøhn & Hansen 2017: 66). However, Bøhn & Hansen (2017: 65) argue that pronunciation assessment criteria in the Norwegian school system are too vague and call for more clearly defined assessment guidelines in regard to pronunciation in order to clarify which phonological features should be emphasised.

Although not strictly related to oral language skills, Bergström et al. (2022: 403) argue that vocabulary learning is an aspect of EFL teaching that is similarly neglected as it is not seen as a learning objective. In their study conducted in Sweden, Bergström et al. (2022: 404) interviewed 14 EFL teachers who were teaching at secondary school levels and found that vocabulary was taught through other activities without any specific method of increasing the pupils' vocabulary or way of assessing the pupils' level of vocabulary. Generally, the teachers assessed the pupils' level of vocabulary by observing their overall language production and based on the teachers' intuition (Bergström et al. 2022: 404). Lindqvist & Oscarson (2019: 762) also investigated this topic and found from a mixed methods approach that Swedish upper secondary school pupils generally overestimate their abilities in regard to their vocabulary. Similar to the Norwegian study, Lindqvist & Oscarson (2019: 763) claim that the Swedish grading criteria are considered vague, which can lead to teachers and pupils being uncertain about what is expected of them, which is a tendency also found in Norway in regard to pronunciation as explained by Bøhn & Hansen (2017). However, these issues are not limited to a Scandinavian context, as the Polish educational system has similar issues of neglecting certain important aspects of EFL such as pronunciation. This is explored below.

3.2 Polish context

In a study conducted on English pronunciation in Polish secondary schools, Szpyra (2014) found that pronunciation was neglected and also less valued than other communicative skills. This meant that grammar and vocabulary were deemed more important than pronunciation, and this resulted in the pupils having low phonetic competence (Szpyra 2014: 56). The study was based on a questionnaire answered by 200 secondary school pupils between the ages of 18 and 19. Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the authors of the study then produced a pronunciation profile of an average Polish secondary school pupil. Among the points revealed by the profile, it was found that most pupils (75%) found English pronunciation easy, assessed their English pronunciation as good or very good (60%), and had a positive or neutral attitude toward pronunciation training (80%). While these numbers

appear to show that pupils see themselves as competent in regard to pronunciation, Szpyra (2014: 57) attributes the pupils' answers to them having poor awareness of their pronunciation problems. To get a different perspective on this pronunciation profile, Szpyra (2014: 63) compares these findings to a study where Frankiewicz et al. (2002) asked 100 Polish secondary school English teachers about phonetic issues. These findings suggested that teachers feel that there is not enough time to teach pronunciation. As such, grammar and vocabulary take precedence over pronunciation because the exams they prepare the pupils for are predominantly written (Frankiewicz et al. 2002 according to Szpyra 2014: 63). Additionally, oral correctness and accuracy are not emphasised in communicative language teaching (Szpyra 2014). Some of these findings seem similar to what was seen in the Scandinavian context as the pupils in both contexts struggle with the oral aspect of learning English

Furthermore, Szpyra draws attention to the fact that the situation is due to a "washback effect" since pronunciation skills have a low priority in several types of examinations throughout the Polish school system:

In all of them communicative skills are more highly valued than phonetic accuracy, which leads to further neglect of pronunciation training by both language teachers and learners. As a result, secondary school graduates usually show no concern for good pronunciation and no awareness of the importance of this aspect of language and are, consequently, characterized by low phonetic competence (Szpyra 2014: 56).

Since pronunciation practice is not prioritised, it is noteworthy that the pupils consider themselves competent in that area; however, if they do not receive any feedback on their pronunciation, they are not able to objectively assess their own competences. While low phonetic competence amongst Danish or Scandinavian pupils is not an issue, it is worth noting that Szpyra (2014) attributes the problem to the exam form in Poland. Since the challenges seem to be connected to the exam, it underlines the influence the exam form has on teaching, equivalent to what we observed in the Danish context, where the way English grammar is taught in Danish is almost dictated by how the exam is structured (see section 5.5).

The Polish and Scandinavian studies point to the issue that certain key aspects of EFL in secondary and upper secondary schools are neglected. Teachers appear uncertain of how to teach aspects such as pronunciation and vocabulary, which is not helped by the tendency that grading guidelines are vague or inefficient in EFL in secondary and upper secondary schools. This is despite the fact that these aspects of EFL are deemed important when teachers are asked directly (Bøhn & Hansen 2017; Bergström et al. 2022), which indicates a general tendency to "teach to the test" across the different countries.

4. Method

In this part we will discuss our methods before and during our data collection in five different upper secondary schools. Following this, we will consider how we approached our data analysis before we proceed to present the results. To explore how pupils engage with the language, particularly focussing on the prevalence of Danish versus English speech and how much English language spoken input the pupils receive and produce, we employed both direct observation and interviews as our methods. Our data consisted of observations of 10 classes from 5 different upper secondary schools, which amounted to a total of 230 pupils, questions to the pupils answered by a show of hands plus interviews with 6 different teachers. We only considered Danish and English, although some students might have a different native language. However, we did not observe the use of any other languages.

4.1 Data collection

Before we collected our data, we ensured that the data would be comparable and replicable by constructing an observation form and an interview guide by following the recommendations in

Ingemann et al. (2018: 173-182, 244-245). Following the construction of our observation form and interview guide, we started the initial contact process. One of the authors had some contacts who work at different upper secondary schools in North Jutland. We sent out a call and six teachers agreed to participate. They were distributed across five different upper secondary schools in North Jutland and in total ten separate classes were observed. Two of the authors observed the classes, interviewed the pupils, and afterwards interviewed the teachers. The participating classes were one 1st year class, four 2nd year classes, and five 3rd year classes, which amounted to a total of 230 pupils. We observed a total of 13 hours and 7 minutes. During that time, we observed a total of 51 groups by observing 2-5 minutes of each group. Finally, at the end of each lecture, we had 10 minutes to ask the pupils our questions. We chose observation because it allowed us to enter the field of research and hear how language is used in real teaching situations, and we chose to complement the study with interviews of both the pupils and teachers because it naturally goes hand in hand with the observation method (Ingemann et al. 2018: 230), and it allowed us to further understand what was at stake regarding how both the pupils and teachers chose to use Danish or English in different situations during class.

The observation form for the class was in two parts so we were able to separate conventional teaching from group work because we predicted that the observations would be rather dissimilar in the two scenarios. Both authors took notes in the observation forms which were compared afterwards in order to confirm validity and avoid subjective bias, thus ensuring inter-rater reliability. Disagreements were resolved by a review of the notes, since the content of the shifts was recorded. Thus, it was easy to see if a shift had simply been missed. The form was a table with room for noting the time, language, activity, remarks if necessary, and how many language shifts took place. The table for group work was similar; however, instead of noting the activity which was implicit, we noted the theme or type of group work, when the language shifts happened, and why. Furthermore, we anticipated that it was necessary to make an estimate of the shifts rather than count them, as we expected there would be too many for only two observers to count, which also turned out to be the case.

Table 1. Example of table for observation – teaching

Time	**Language (Da/En)**	**Activity**	**Remarks (Who speaks what)**	**Number of switches**
8.15	Primarily En	Today's plan is presented	Questions are answered in Danish	12

Table 2. Example of table for observation – group work

Group	**Time observed**	**Topic**	**Language spoken most (Da/En)**	**Code-switches - when and why**	**Estimated number of switches**
1	8.45-8.52	Analysis/ grammar	En	Pupil 1 only speaks Danish Pupil 2 tries to negotiate and get back to speaking English Pupil 3 speaks Danish to pupil 1 and English to pupil 2	50+

After the observation, we asked the pupils a few questions in Danish to learn more about their preferences for language use (English/Danish), specifically when learning English grammar, as this was our initial interest. We did not intend for it to take more than ten minutes, and therefore they answered the questions by a show of hands so we could count how many of them believed something or other, and they had the option to comment or elaborate on their answers if needed. The questions were:

- Whether they were taught grammar in English or Danish
- What they thought was expected of them
- If they used Danish, English or Latin grammatical terms
- What they would prefer to use
- If they preferred to discuss grammar they are familiar with in English or Danish
- If they preferred to discuss grammar they are unfamiliar with in English or Danish
- Whether or not they thought grammar was a difficult subject.

It should be noted as a source of error that asking the pupils to answer the questions by show of hands can cause them to experience peer pressure or lemming mentality as they could see what the majority of their peers answered. Despite this, this procedure was chosen as it was minimally invasive, quick to do, and did not cause any issues regarding GDPR.

After the classes were finished, we interviewed the respective teachers in Danish, following our interview guide. The guide was made so it would pave the way towards a semi-structured interview as it had a few main questions and multiple elaborating questions (Ingemann et al. 2018: 158; Kvale and Brinkmann 2008: 27, 164). During the interviews with the teachers, one researcher took notes while the other led the interview. We chose not to record the interviews, as they were often short, informal ad hoc conversations taking place in the staff room. The first question regarded their thoughts about the language they speak when they teach and functioned as an icebreaker. The other questions centred around the following topics:

- If it had always been like that throughout their career
- Whether they teach grammar in English or Danish
- Their language during other activities
- Why there is/is not a difference
- Whether they think their pupils view grammar as difficult
- Whether they think their pupils are good at grammar
- Whether they enjoyed teaching grammar
- What they think about teaching grammar in the language they teach grammar in
- If they think it would be different in the opposite language and if so, how
- How the teaching language might affect the pupils

4.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the data began with an initial eyeballing of what we had noted in the forms and what the interviews had in common and where they diverged. We relied on the notes we took during the interviews as we did not record them. We used descriptive statistics to portray in which situations Danish and English were used based on what we had written down in the observation forms. Through collaborative efforts, we also ensured inter-rater reliability, as we compared our notes and incorporated the highest number of shifts, when details of the individual shifts had been written down.

We manually counted how many of the pupils preferred to be taught grammar in Danish or English when it concerns grammar they are familiar and unfamiliar with. These numbers were added

up and visualised in a bar diagram (figure 2). We also created a bar chart which showed how many of the pupils preferred to use English, Danish or Latin terms (figure 3). We calculated the frequency of statements during the interviews with the teachers such as "the reason we teach grammar in Danish, is because that part of the exam is in Danish", "I feel like I have to teach to the test", "pupils find grammar easier when I teach in Danish", and other statements which were present in multiple interviews.

Afterwards, using descriptive statistics, we compared code-switching in classroom settings and group work. We counted how many groups changed language when reading out loud, how many had long periods of silence, and whether groups changed from Danish to English or vice versa. Regarding classroom settings, we calculated the average amount of shifts, and we elaborated on who made the shifts in which situations. Finally, we employed the information we accumulated from the interviews with the teachers to form an additional perspective on our observations.

5. Results

As mentioned, our data consisted of observations of 10 classes from 5 different upper secondary schools, which amounted to a total of 230 pupils plus interviews with 6 different teachers. Since we did not specify to the teachers what we wanted to observe during class, we ended up viewing various classroom activities. However, the questions we asked the pupils at the end of each class were identical and while the starting point of the interviews was rooted in our observations, all teachers were also asked the same questions.

5.1 Code-switches in the classroom and group work

We differentiated between lecturing, i.e., when the teacher stood by the whiteboard and the pupils engaged with the teacher on a one-on-one basis, and "group work", i.e., when the pupils worked in groups and the teacher occasionally checked in on them. We chose to do so as we anticipated that our observations would differ substantially in those two scenarios. We observed 13 hours and 7 minutes, and lecturing made up 9 hours and 26 minutes of the total time observed. We were able to count every shift during the lecturing, which amounted to a total of 163 shifts combined between all ten classes, or 16.3 shifts on average in each class. On the contrary, during group work we felt the need to make an estimate of how many shifts took place, as there were too many to reliably record. Group work made up 3 hours and 41 minutes of the total time we observed.[3] We estimated that over a thousand shifts took place during that time, distributed between 51 groups in total.

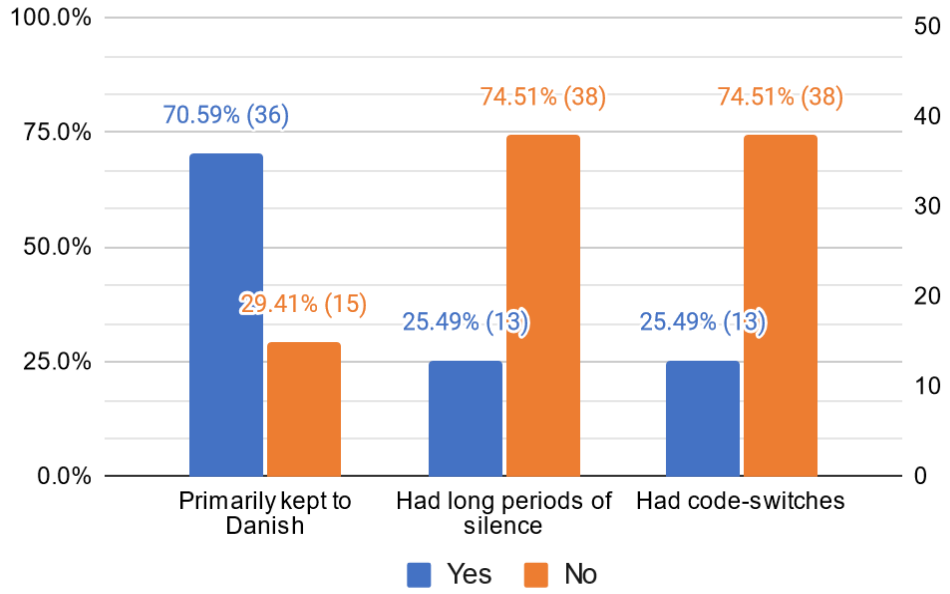
During lecturing both pupils and teachers primarily kept to English unless the teacher was giving an isolated message unrelated to the subject in class. We did observe code-switching, for example when a pupil was looking for a word. We also saw a lot of code-switching during group work. Furthermore, we note that most pupils used Google Docs or similar tools to share a document to take notes during group work, which created a situation where they were able to complete their work without communicating verbally.

We observed a tendency that the groups primarily kept to Danish during their discussions in group work but shifted to English when reading aloud. Moreover, the teacher nudged them to speak English when they were present, though the pupils chose to speak Danish unless the teacher was present or they read aloud, thus, their default language was Danish. More specifically, of the 51 groups we observed, 70.59% consistently showed this tendency and only spoke English when reading aloud except when they occasionally uttered an English word. Among the groups, 25.49% also had long periods of silence. As our method was impressionistic observation as opposed to detailed recordings,

[3] One class did not have any group work when we observed them.

we marked instances as a period of silence when it felt like an awkward silence rather than a pause occurring in natural speech. Finally, 25.49% exhibited code-switching where the group members conversed in different languages. In 46.15% of these groups, the instances of code-switching resulted in a shift from English to Danish, while in the other 38.46%, it resulted in a shift from Danish to English.

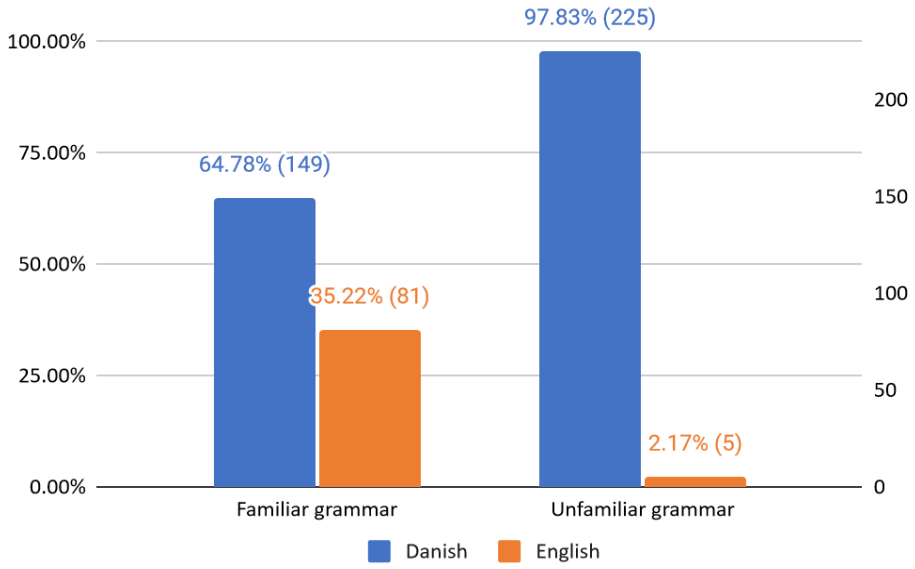
Figure 1. Code-switches in group work (N=51, shown on the right-hand axis)



5.2 Pupil opinions and preferences

At the end of each lesson, we had ten minutes to ask the pupils questions. Their answers indicated some general tendencies in the schools we visited. The first tendency that became clear after the data collection was that English grammar was typically taught in Danish. More specifically, this tendency was observed in eight of the classes while in the other two classes grammar was taught in English by the same teacher. However, the teacher was not observed to explicitly teach grammar but in the interview, they elaborated that they attempted a more integrated approach and did not have a consistent focus on grammar. As we tried to understand the implications of teaching grammar in Danish, we asked the pupils which language they preferred grammar to be taught in, whether it was grammar they were familiar or unfamiliar with. The result of these questions is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Grammar language preferences (N=230)

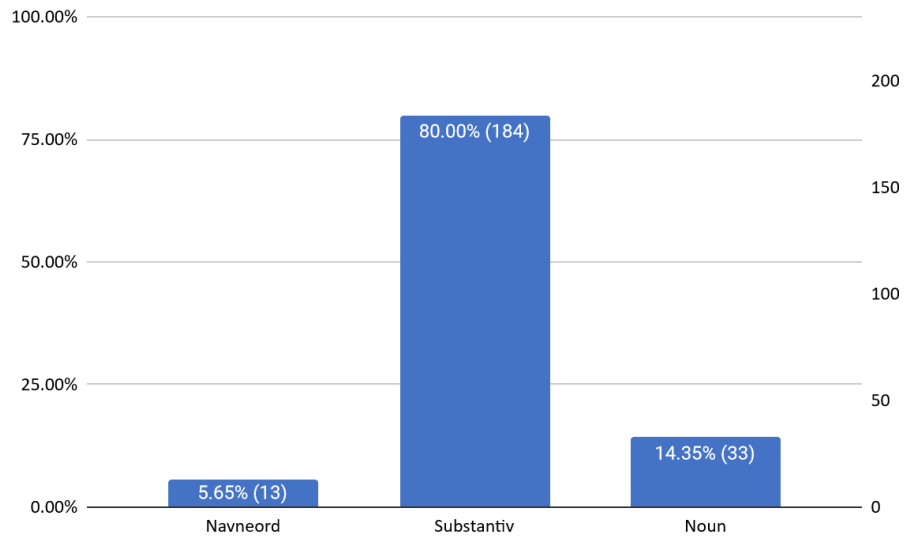


As the figure shows, 97.83% of the pupils preferred new grammar to be taught in Danish, while only 64.78% of pupils preferred repetition of grammar to be taught in Danish. When asking the pupils about these topics, we also asked whether they experienced grammar in general as difficult compared to other English related topics. To this, 41.74% of pupils indicated that they thought grammar to be particularly difficult, while the rest either thought grammar was just as difficult as other topics or easier. Unfortunately, since the pupils were asked to raise their hand if they thought it was more difficult and to keep their hand down if they thought it was the same or less difficult, we cannot say how many thought it was the same and how many thought it was less.

5.3 Grammatical terms

The final trend we observed was that the pupils preferred Latin terms. To investigate this, we only gave the example of the English term "noun", the Danish version of the Latin term "substantiv" and the Danish term "navneord" as the variation between other word classes is less pronounced. We found that 80% of the pupils preferred to use the term "substantiv", while 5.65% prefer the Danish term "navneord", and 14.35% prefer the English term "noun". These results are visualised in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3. Grammar terminology preferences (N=230)



Due to the nature of the data collected, it is not possible to test whether there are any correlations between pupils' responses to the different questions.

5.4 Teacher interviews

During the interviews with the six teachers, we saw some common elements. All of the teachers try to keep their instructions in English, apart from grammar, so English grammar is intentionally taught in Danish as opposed to everything else that is taught in English lessons. Five out of six said that they teach grammar in Danish simply because the exam is in Danish while one pointed out that the pupils are not allowed to use English terms at the exam. Since the pupils are not taught the English terms, one teacher remarked that the pupils "may lack the necessary terminology to discuss English grammar in English". Of the six teachers, five of them feel they have to "teach to the test", and two even experience grammar taught in Danish as something that is separate from the rest of the lesson. One of these teachers pointed out that teaching grammar in Danish may cause the pupils "to find it difficult to integrate the rules they have learned into their language". Though five teachers see the advantage in teaching grammar in English and think that the benefits outweigh the costs, four of them also believe that their pupils find grammar easier when taught in Danish. Finally, four of the teachers enjoyed teaching grammar. However, all of them explained that the pupils' lack of interest and participation was demotivating and made grammar teaching difficult. Additionally, one teacher stated that it was difficult to make pupils speak English when doing group work even though the teacher said that they had a very strict policy in regard to making pupils speak English. This sentiment was shared among other teachers, and one teacher expressed that it was especially frustrating when pupils insisted on answering in Danish despite being asked a question in English.

6. Discussion

The small-scale study reported here showed a tendency among upper secondary pupils to predominantly utilise Danish during English lessons, often resorting to Danish or opting for silence altogether. We also found that English teachers used both Danish and English when teaching, although

this was found to be domain specific as grammar was taught in Danish whereas other topics or activities were taught in English.

These observations pose a range of questions, some of which will be discussed in the following sections. In particular, we focus on the areas of pupils' willingness to communicate, comparisons with the Scandinavian and Polish contexts and language policing. Finally, we consider aspects such as cognitive load and the wider implications of the established behaviour's contribution to the wider discourse surrounding foreign language learning in Denmark as areas for further research.

6.1 Willingness to communicate, language anxiety, and dual vulnerability

One of the things that stood out to us was the fact that pupils not only were very unwilling to communicate in English but also unwilling to communicate at all. In the group work sessions, where the stakes are lower than when answering a question in front of the class, pupils were also often quiet, preferring to work collaboratively in online documents, without communicating much orally. While this may have been due to the presence of two observers, we were not given the impression that this posed an unusual behaviour by the teachers.

As mentioned above in the introduction, according to the *læreplan,* the goal of the English A level is for pupils to reach the C1 level at the end of the three-year stx (following the CEFR also introduced above). This means that they should be able to:

> ... express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions … use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes … produce clear, well- structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices. (ILS n.d.)

Considering the observations collected for this study, where very little oral output in English was observed during pupils' group work, it can be discussed if group work facilitates an adequate opportunity for the pupils to achieve the required level of skill. Indeed, the pupils almost seemed to actively avoid speaking English. Since they avoid speaking English, it would be prudent to consider whether the phenomenon is caused by anxiety, inadequate opportunities for engagement, or if pupils simply do not find it important to practise their oral proficiency. This lack of motivation can, for example, be explained with reference to Bergström et al. (2022: 404) who suggest that "... the teachers' integrated approach to vocabulary learning was their reliance on incidental vocabulary learning, where words are understood as 'picked up along the way'". This finding points to the fact that vocabulary in EFL is underprioritised even though Bergström et al. (2022: 393) argue that it is a core feature of language proficiency, which requires explicit attention. Additionally, as the teachers did not see vocabulary as a learning objective, this could prompt pupils to deem this aspect of language learning trivial and be seen as something to "pick up along the way". This trivialisation of certain aspects of EFL could also lead pupils to overestimate their own abilities as the study by Lindqvist & Oscarson (2019: 762) (introduced in 3.1) finds in relation to the vocabulary of Swedish upper secondary school pupils. In their study, Lindqvist & Oscarson (2019: 747) investigated secondary school pupils' self-assessment of their vocabulary skills, which revealed that high performing pupils overestimated their vocabulary skills.

Adding to the topic of pupil self-evaluation, In the Polish study, Szpyra (2014: 57) finds that pupils overestimated their pronunciation abilities and specifies:

> (75.5%) of the respondents consider English pronunciation either easy or not very difficult and only 23% think it is rather difficult or very difficult. The high percentage of the former views can be attributed to the respondents' poor awareness of their pronunciation problems…

Although not being related to vocabulary like the study by Lindqvist & Oscarson (2019), Szpyra (2014) finds that Polish pupils overestimate their English abilities in relation to their pronunciation skills.

As such, in both the Swedish and the Polish study, there is a tendency for pupils to overestimate their linguistic abilities, which, in turn, could cause a lack of motivation to practise their oral proficiency, if they think they are already at the level they need to be.

In the 2023 report by NCFF investigating motivations and barriers to foreign language learning among Danish primary, secondary, and upper secondary pupils, the authors point to a "dual vulnerability" among the pupils (Lund et al. 2023: 15), which they describe as an extension of language anxiety. They state that this duality stems from the fact that learning a foreign language entails learning both content (e.g., learning about British and US history, media analysis, literary analysis etc.) as well as expression (the ability to communicate in the foreign language, i.e., vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar). The anxiety experienced by pupils in the foreign language classroom can thus be rooted in either fear of giving the wrong answer or giving the right answer in the wrong way – or a combination of the two. This type of dual vulnerability is thus unique to the foreign language classroom. As this dual vulnerability can inhibit some pupils from participating, one proposed solution to this problem is using translanguaging where multiple different languages are encouraged in EFL classrooms (Williams 2000: 144; Holmen 2023). This practice could lessen language anxiety and strengthen pupils' WTC (Holmen 2023: 47). However, a concern is that using languages other than English will not strengthen pupils' English oral proficiency.

6.2 Contextual comparison

When comparing the observations in our small-scale study to the studies made in Nordic and Polish contexts, we found notable similarities. In the classrooms we visited, both the teacher and pupils generally kept to English except for specific scenarios. Contrarily, in group work contexts, the pupils generally kept to Danish but had a large amount of code switches between Danish and English. As teachers also found it difficult to make pupils not speak Danish, our observations seem to echo those found by aus der Wieschen & Sert (2021), who observed pupils almost exclusively speaking Danish and being more willing to participate if they were allowed to do so albeit in a primary school context. Our observations also suggested that the pupils overwhelmingly preferred being taught grammar in Danish if the topics were unfamiliar to them with about one third of the pupils open to the idea of repeating in English grammar they had already been taught in Danish. However, the teachers express that the key reason grammar is taught in Danish is because of the exam, which is similar to the findings of Bøhn & Hansen (2017) and Bergström et al. (2022), who found that teachers emphasised the importance of teaching pronunciation and vocabulary, respectively, but lacked more specified assessment criteria. Szpyra (2014) finds that pronunciation specifically appears to be neglected in a Polish context, and the reason behind its neglect also appears to be because of the exam. Across the studies mentioned and our study, the characteristics of the exam govern the activities of the classroom.

6.3 Domain-specific use and language policing

In our observations, we found that Danish was often used when the activities in the classroom focused on grammar. We also found that pupils prefer that Danish is used when teachers introduce new grammatical concepts. However, a larger proportion of pupils are open to discussing grammar in English if they are familiar with the concepts (figure 2).

However, as we accounted for in section 1.1, the part of the written exam for English stx A which focuses on testing the pupil's grammatical knowledge and competence is formulated in Danish and the pupils are required to give their answers in Danish as well as using the Latin grammatical terms (e.g., *substantiv* instead of the English *noun* or the Danish *navneord*). This coincides with the practices we observed and was also substantiated by five of the six teachers we interviewed as they

pointed out that they teach grammar in Danish only because that is what the pupils are required to learn to pass the exam. With that in mind, it makes sense for teachers to also introduce and teach grammatical topics in Danish and for pupils to participate in activities focusing on grammar in Danish as well. Ultimately, the exam determines what is taught and, crucially, how it is taught.

This small-scale study did not look into the motivations for this domain-specific use in the exam, in other words *why* the grammar part of the written exam in English stx A is held in Danish. One possible explanation might be the *cognitive load* argument, which is explored in further detail in section 6.4.

We see two main challenges to this domain-specific use, however. The first one concerns how this switch in language contributes to a conceptualization of and discourse surrounding the idea of grammar (and with it possibly other more rule-based linguistic disciplines such as phonetics and phonology) as something difficult. This is certainly a common discourse surrounding German in the Danish school context and we return to this general discussion below in section 6.4.

The second challenge which the domain-specific use of English and Danish might cause is a disruption to the primacy which should be given to English in the English language classroom. In the Danish upper secondary classes we visited, we experienced that the teachers tried to encourage the pupils to only speak English by adopting an "English only" rule, most likely borrowing from the idea of *language immersion*. Following the work of Amir & Musk (2013) and Amir (2013), the act of trying to establish and enforce a classroom practice where the target-language is the only acceptable language in the classroom can be termed *language policing* (Amir & Musk 2023: 151). They define this as "the mechanism deployed by the teacher and/or pupils to (re-)establish the normatively prescribed target language as the *medium of classroom interaction*…" (Amir & Musk 2013: 151, [italics in original]) and interpret it as an example of "*micro-level language policy-in-progress*" (Amir & Musk 2013: 151, [italics in original]) in the context of an English language classroom in an international school in Sweden. The act of language policing spans the break of the "target-language only" rule to the result of the language policing and can be described in the three steps this process includes: The breach of the rule, the act of language policing, and result of this interaction (Amir & Musk 2013). While language policing is often *other-policed* where more than one person is involved in the policing, language can also be *self-policed* where only the person breaching the "target-language only" rule is involved (Amir 2013).

6.4 Further research

While the small-scale study reported here certainly raises more questions than it answers, this section explores some avenues for further research, focusing on the cognitive load argument with regards to the domain specific use of English and Danish, respectively, and the possible link to the wider implications of this specific use.

Cognitive load theory (Sweller et al. 2011) is a learning theory based on an evolutionary approach to human cognitive architecture. Very simply put, according to the theory, the total working memory resources required to understand or solve a certain learning task are affected both by the design of the task and the difficulty of the learning itself. Returning to the domain-specific use of Danish in the English grammar written exam (and thus in the classroom), perhaps one avenue for future research could be to investigate whether the use of English or Danish in teaching and testing English grammar impacts the cognitive load experienced by Danish upper secondary pupils.

As mentioned above, the implications of domain-specific use not only pertain to cognitive load and learning outcomes. It likely also impacts the perceived complexity of grammar and other linguistic fields, such as phonetics and phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and the like. A suggestion for further research would be to investigate further how the domain-specific use of Danish and English in the English language classroom in Danish upper secondary schools impacts pupils' perception of the complexity of linguistic subjects (predominantly taught in Danish).

7. Conclusion

The study reported here investigated some of the complexities surrounding English foreign language teaching in Danish upper secondary schools. The main focus of the data collection was on tracking the use of English and Danish in the English language classroom in terms of frequency of use, language shifts as well as domain specific use. In the interpretation of the data, we considered the impact of factors such as language anxiety and self-perceived competence on pupils' willingness to communicate in English.

The study's exploration of code-switching in classroom settings highlights the importance of creating a supportive environment that encourages active English communication among pupils. The study points out the lack of oral proficiency training and calls for continued efforts to enhance language teaching practices and promote a more engaging learning experience for pupils in upper secondary schools. Finally, some implications of the current patterns in the use of Danish and English, respectively, were considered as well as avenues for further research.

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Erratum: Eleven på dobbeltarbejde – lærer-elev-interaktion behandlet med den økologiske AAA-model

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Erratum: Originalartikel "Eleven på dobbeltarbejde – lærer-elev-interaktion behandlet med den økologiske AAA-model" er publiceret i *Globe: A Journal of Language, Culture and Communication*, 18, 2024: 18-30. https://doi.org/10.54337/ojs.globe.v18i.9057

Beskrivelse af rettelse

I originalartiklen "Eleven på dobbeltarbejde – lærer-elev-interaktion behandlet med den økologiske AAA-model", publiceret i *Globe: A Journal of Language, Culture and Communication*, Vol.18, 2025, DOI: 10.54337/ojs.globe.v18i.9057, er der foretaget følgende rettelse:

På side 22 er afsnittet med ordlyden

> Projektets omfattende empiriske materiale blev produceret i maj, juni og august 2022 på en folkeskole på den københavnske vestegn. Materialet består af videooptagelser af undervisning, videooptagelser af elevers gruppearbejde filmet af elever selv, observationsnoter, feltnoter, interviews med lærere og elever, spørgeskemaundersøgelse med elever omhandlende sprog, interesser og skolegang, udformning og gennemføring af undervisningsforløb om sproglighed i dansk, fotos af klasseværelset, elever og skolen samt skriftlige elevopgaver med sprogportrætter.

udskiftet med følgende ordlyd:

> Projektets empiriske materiale blev produceret i maj, juni og august 2022 på en folkeskole i Storkøbenhavn. Materialet består af videooptagelser af undervisning, observationsnoter, interviews med lærere og elever samt fotos af klasseværelset, elever og skolen.

Begrundelse for rettelse

Ændringen skyldes udelukkende en ændring i afhandlingens strukturering og ændrer ikke noget ved artiklens indhold og budskab.