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**Exclamative clauses with *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* in Danish:  
Insubordination and phrasal discontinuity**

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The picture on the frontpage (*Camel Riding Point in Petra*) was taken by Maria Gadeberg Otte.

The editor of this issue is Andrea Bruun.

### **Editorial comment**

In this issue of *Skifter om Samtalegrammatik*, Søren Sandager Sørensen investigates Danish exclamatives with question words, focusing on the three question words *sikke*, *hvilken*, and *hvor*.

Sørensen explores Danish exclamatives in example sentences from the KorpusDK database and previous publications. Through a systematic analysis of example sentences, it is first presented what the possible exclamatives with question words are in Danish. Then it is thoroughly described what the syntactic contexts of exclamatives with the three question words (*sikke*, *hvilken* and *hvor*) are.

The reader may notice that this work is based on exclamatives in Danish written language. So why is it featured in *Skifter om Samtalegrammatik* that focuses on Danish talk-in-interaction? Sørensen acknowledges this limitation in the paper's *epilogue*. However, the epilogue does provide some preliminary comparison of the findings with those from research on assessments within Interactional Linguistics. The potential significant differences between Danish written language and Danish talk-in-interaction are highlighted.

Sørensen also presents how the work on exclamatives in Danish written language may be taken forward and investigated in Danish talk-in-interaction. Several suggestions for what future research should explore from an interactional point of view are proposed. This may inspire the reader to continue and build upon the results presented in this issue. This piece of work was based on an assignment for the Linguistics programme at Aarhus University in spring 2016.

This editorial comment was written by Andrea Bruun.

# Exclamative clauses with *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* in Danish: Insubordination and phrasal discontinuity

by SØREN SANDAGER SØRENSEN

## 1 Introduction

In this study, I describe exclamative constructions with certain question words in Danish, with a focus on their word order, and relate this to their status as potentially in subordinate constructions. Previous studies of exclamatives have studied semantic aspects of such clauses, while recent studies focus on syntactic properties. Exclamatives have also been considered an instance of in subordination (Heine et al. 2020).

Danish is interesting in this aspect because some of the exclamative markers have peculiar, but known diachronic origins, that might shed light on some of the claims and questions made in previous literature.

This article will first specify the possible exclamatives based on which question word is used, and then describe the syntactic patterns (primarily word order) used with *hvor* 'how', *hvilken* 'which' and *sikke* 'what a' occurring in exclamative constructions.

In section 2, I explain central concepts, previous descriptions, and perspectives on the relationship between exclamative constructions and other constructions, such as questions and in subordinate constructions. In section 3, I provide information on the availability of different sentence types relevant for exclamatives in Danish and discuss the distribution of question words and other features. In section 4, I analyze the possible word orders and syntactic contexts that exclamatives with *hvor*, *sikke* and *hvilken* occur in based on corpus data. In section 5, I discuss the implications that the Danish constructions have for theories about the grammaticalization and structuring of exclamative constructions. Section 6 is the conclusion, followed by an epilogue with reflections and interactional perspectives.

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 Exclamative constructions

The concept *exclamation* refers to a semantic category that includes the affective expression of e.g., a surprised or astonished attitude towards an event or referent (see also König & Siemund 2007: 316 and

Michaelis 2001). In some languages, this can be expressed through a specific syntactic construction often resembling a subordinate interrogative (Zevakhina 2016:765):

- (1) *What a beautiful rainbow I saw yesterday!*
- (2) *How very beautiful this rainbow is!*

These examples resemble subordinate interrogative clauses because they position question words initially (i.e. *what* and *how*) and because of their word order, where the finite verb is placed after both the subject and question word. The use of *what a* and *how very* is also specific to these exclamative constructions in English (Zevakhina 2016).

Nouwen & Chernilovskaya (2015) divides exclamatives into two groups: Type 1 exclamatives are directed at a referent (e.g., *What a man!*), and Type 2 exclamatives are directed at an event (not available in English). Exclamatives often formulate a speaker being surprised by the scale of some property. Many adverbs and adjectives have inherent gradable properties, while some nouns also have gradable properties (such as *idiot* evaluating on a scale of idiocy), while others do not (e.g., *cards*), and exclamatives target such scales.

Exclamative constructions can include subordinate clauses. A subordinate exclamative consists of a subordinate clause with a matrix clause of the type *I am surprised* and the like, where the subordinate clause takes the form of a subordinate interrogative clause, and the whole utterance can be understood as an exclamation.

Some exclamatives do not only resemble subordinate interrogative clauses, but they can also resemble independent interrogative clauses. Some rhetorical questions are very similar to, or even difficult to distinguish from, exclamatives in meaning (Nouwen & Chernilovskaya 2015), such as *How stupid are you?* and the like.

Zevakhina (2016:775) divides exclamatives into five “contexts”:

- Context (i): question word + noun phrase with a gradable adjective in an attributive position (e.g., *What a beautiful dress my sister bought!*)
- Context (ii): question word + noun phrase with an elided gradable adjective in an attributive position (e.g., *What a dress my sister bought!*)

- Context (iii): question word + gradable adjective in a predicative position (e.g., *How beautiful this dress is!*)
- Context (iv): question word + gradable adverb (e.g., *How fast my brother runs!*)
- Context (v): question word + an elided gradable adverb or a verb (e.g., *How my brother runs!*)

As this study does not focus on gradability or ellipsis, the contexts will thus be used as syntactic criteria, i.e. context (i) in the sense of a question word + noun phrase + adjective, and context (ii) in the sense of a question word + noun phrase without any adjectives. The plus symbols are not to be understood linearly; adjectives might be within or outside of noun phrases (cf. later discussion of discontinuous vs. continuous phrases). The relations between these contexts and the types in Nouwen & Chernilovskaya (2015) are complex. Zevakhina (2016) proposes that some contexts cluster together, so that one group contains contexts (i-ii) and another (iii-v).

## 2.2 Insubordination and word order

The concept of insubordination is used by Evans where it is defined as “the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses” (2007: 367). This formulation is in many ways a working definition and a paradox, but has spawned research on the grammaticalization of markers of subordination into markers of something else. An example is the work by D’Hertefelt (2018) on insubordination that includes the “standard” marker of either complement clauses (e.g., *at* ‘that’) or conditional clauses (e.g., *hvis* ‘if’), in a selection of Germanic languages, including Danish. Some of those are exclamations, just as we will see how the exclamative clauses with question words investigated in this article form another example.

Some studies on Danish have already touched upon insubordination, especially related to word order, but without using that term specifically. The grammar of Danish by Hansen & Heltoft (2011) essentially takes the consequence of insubordination and describe word order as a different parameter than clause dependency; the correlation between the two is not one-to-one. In contrast, many traditional Danish grammars (e.g., Christensen & Christensen 2009) use the terms *main*

*clause word order* and *subordinate clause word order* to refer to different word order formats, even though they acknowledge that the terms do not reflect the actual functions. Note that the mismatch between terms and functions has been known at least since Diderichsen's (1946) topological field model, even if that model has been part of popularizing the idea that they actually match (Heltoft 2016).

The word order associated with and sometimes considered defining for independent (i.e., main) clauses in Danish is "V2". In a V2 word order, the verb takes up the second phrasal slot of a clause (Holmberg & Rijkhoff 1998) after an initial slot – the foundation field (FF) – which may contain phrases of different functions (e.g., subjects, adverbs, objects). This is also known as *declarative* word order. Thus, imperative and polar interrogative clause types are seen as having *non-declarative* word order, differing from declarative word order through an empty initial slot, i.e. with the finite verb first (Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 316), but treated as a subtype of the declarative word order.

Declarative word order contrasts with *neutral* word order (the term introduced by Hansen & Heltoft to replace *subordinate clause word order*, hence adopted for this article). Here, the second slot is always taken up by the subject, pushing the verb to a later slot in the clause (the exact number of slots depends on the occurrence of e.g. adverbials etc.). The initial slot is known as the "conjunctive field" (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:1155) and can be filled by subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns, which may have syntactic roles within the clause, or subjective particles (Hansen & Heltoft 2007:1155). Later in this article, we will see such material. Another feature of the neutral word order is that adverbials are placed after the subject, but before the verb, while adverbials in the declarative word order is placed after the finite verb. Since adverbials are optional, clauses with neutral word order can be V3 or V4 (when including the conjunctive field, as it may contain arguments; see Table 1). Note that the V3 here is somewhat different from V3 in main clauses, as described by Zachariassen (2022).

In Hansen & Heltoft, independent clauses using the neutral word order are known as "subjective main clauses" (2011:1570). This describes not only exclamative clauses and markers of subordinate interrogatives, but also the use of *hvis* 'if' and *at* 'that' in independent clauses as documented by D'Hertefelt (2018). The neutral word order has been described as exclamative (Becker-Christensen 2010:84). *Neutral* should not be understood as the opposite of *subjective* here, but

as in opposition to the assertive meaning ascribed to the declarative word order. Speech act meaning can be marked by the content of the conjunctive slot rather than the word order itself, but some conjunctions may determine the word order (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:1155).

It is worth noting that the opposite pattern also exists, i.e. the use of the independent clause word order V2 in subordinate clauses, which is known for clauses introduced by *fordi* 'because' (Mikkelsen 2011) or the complementizer *at* 'that' (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:317).

Word order	1	2	3	4
V2	FF	Finite verb	Subject	Adverb
Neutral	Conj.	Subject	Adverb	Finite verb

Table 1. First four slots of the word orders in focus.

### 2.3 Discontinuity and noun phrase order

Word order discontinuity is the situation where words that belong together in the same unit do not occur next to each other, but with other units in between. Overall tendencies of word order favor continuous constructions, whereas discontinuous constructions can be used for special functions (Rijkhoff 2015). For noun phrases, this means that units describing the same referent do not occur in linear order. There are complications in establishing when such units still belong to the same phrase and how to treat apposition and intonation (McGregor 2021). In exclamatives, the question word may occur initially and thus distant from an element it modifies (Delsing 2010:29, who calls it "stranding").

Danish noun phrases generally follow the structure *determiner – adjective – noun*, but can also contain postposed (i.e. after the noun) modifiers (Christensen & Christensen 2009:166). However, when an adjective is further modified by degree adverbials like *så* 'so', the indefinite article is placed after *så* and the adjective, as in *så klodset en formulering* 'so clumsy a wording' (literal translation) or 'such a clumsy wording' (Norde 2019:166). The same order is seen in question word phrases with the degree question word *hvor* 'how' in the same place as *så*. In a clause, the whole phrase (incl. *hvor*, adjective, article and noun) is generally placed in the foundation field or conjunctive field (e.g., in subordinate interrogative clauses) like other question word phrases. However, as it will be demonstrated in this article, noun phrase discontinuity can occur when only part of such a phrase is preposed (only *hvor*) in the initial slot while modifying an adjective that



occurs in a later noun phrase. In the analysis below, there are thus two parameters:

- 1) preposed question word modifying something in an immediately following noun phrase, or a discontinuous phrase, i.e. where a verb or a different constituent is placed between the preposed question word and the phrase it modifies something in,
- 2) the indefinite article occurring initially within the noun phrase or after the adjective.

#### *2.4 Data and method*

This study is corpus-based and exclamatives in Danish will be described on the basis of example sentences gathered from language in use. I have used KorpusDK as my primary source for sentences, but also relied on example sentences in previous publications. KorpusDK is a corpus of written language texts in Danish, such as books, newspaper articles and some websites, and is available through *ordnet.dk* from the Society for Danish Language and Literature (DSL, *Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab*). I have glossed and translated the examples or adapted them from previous sources. I have also benefited from and been guided by introspection.

### **3 Possible exclamatives in Danish**

#### *3.1 Question words in Danish*

Question words in Danish (*spørgeord* or *hv-ord*) are characteristically written with <hv>, similar to the English <wh>, though it is realized as [v] in most varieties of Danish. They are commonly divided into pronominal and adverbial types mirroring the parts of speech in Danish (see Table 2).

Pronominal question words (Hansen & Heltoft 2001: 601-2)	Adverbial question words (Christensen & Christensen 2009: 146)
<i>hvem</i> 'who' (gen. <i>hvis</i> 'whose')	<i>hvor</i> 'where, how'
<i>hvad</i> 'what'	<i>hvordan</i> 'how'
<i>hvilken</i> 'which'	<i>hvornår</i> 'when'
	<i>hvorfor</i> 'why'

Table 2. List of question words in Danish.

The word *hvem* is the human equivalent of the inanimate (or indeterminate) *hvad*. Both *hvad* and *hvilken* can be used to modify other nominals, and *hvad* can be used in this sense explicitly in the construction *hvad for en/nogen*, lit. 'what for' + indefinite article/pronoun (Hansen & Heltoft 2001:608). The modifying *hvad* is sometimes regarded a spoken language phenomenon (Hansen & Steensig 2018) and considered informal. The word *hvilken* is the common form and has the neuter form *hvilket* and plural *hvilke*; the others are not declined.

*Hvor* is both locative (translatable to 'where') and quantitative (i.e., in the senses 'how much, how many' and 'how + adjective'). The locative *hvor* can be compounded with directionals as in *hvorhen* 'where' and prepositions as in *hvertil* 'where to' or *hvorfra* 'where from' (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:1524, Nguyen 2019). The quantitative *hvor* is used for both gradable and non-gradable quantities of mass and of numbers (i.e., 'how much' and 'how many').

The word *sikke* (at best translatable to 'what a', but not always singular) is not a question word, but it is etymologically related to *hvilken* (Heltoft 2007). Here it will be treated on the same level as the question words because it is only used to form exclamatives.

### 3.2 Independent interrogative clauses

All question words are used in independent question clauses. Such clauses are marked by having the phrase with the question word initially within the initial slot of the clause. With V2 word order, the finite verb follows the question phrase.

- (3) *Hvor er mine briller?*  
where are my glasses?  
“Where are my glasses?”  
(KorpusDK)
- (4) *Hvor stor er kaskelotten?*  
how big is sperm.whale.DEF  
“How big is the sperm whale?”  
(KorpusDK)
- (5) *Hvornår kommer kometen?*  
when comes comet.DEF  
“When does the comet come?”  
(Christensen & Christensen 2009: 146)
- (6) *Hvordan ser den ud?*  
how looks it out  
“How does it look?”  
(Christensen & Christensen 2009: 146)
- (7) *Hvorfor regner det altid?*  
why rains it always  
“Why does it always rain?”  
(Christensen & Christensen 2009: 146)
- (8) *Hvem har skrevet H.C. Andersens eventyr?*  
who has written NAME’s fairy.tale  
“Who wrote the fairy tales of H. C. Andersen?”  
(KorpusDK)
- (9) *Hvad kan lægen i lægevagten gøre for dig?*  
what can doctor.DEF in emergency.service.DEF do for  
you  
“What can the doctor in the emergency service do for you?”  
(KorpusDK)
- (10) *Og hvilken bil foretrækker så Deres Majestæt?*  
and which car prefers then your majesty  
“And which car does Your Highness prefer?”  
(KorpusDK)

These examples show question words used in independent interrogative clauses and with V2 word order with the question phrase in initial position (not including paratactic conjunctions). There are no discontinued phrases allowed in the relevant examples – all question words occur initially and adjacent to any modified items. Moving them out would change their status. Echo-questions with in situ placement of questions words are possible (Nyvad 2019), but will not be treated here.

### 3.3 Independent exclamative clauses

Only a limited set of the question words are actually used in independent exclamative clauses.

- (11) *Nej, hvor er den sød!*  
 no how is it sweet  
 "How sweet it is!"

(Christensen & Christensen 2009: 226)

- (12) *Hvilken forfærdelig situation var jeg ikke blevet  
 bragt i*  
 which terrible situation was I not been  
 brought in  
 "What a terrible situation I was brought into!"

(KorpusDK)

- (13) *Hvordan kunne du?*  
 how could you.sg  
 "How could you!"

(KorpusDK)

(11) exemplifies quantitative *hvor* as a marker of exclamation (with a turn-initial *nej*), while (12) illustrates the exclamative use of *hvilken*. (13) is the only construction with exclamative *hvordan* I was able to find in the corpus. The word *hvor* can also be used in this sentence, i.e. *hvor kunne du* (multiple cases in KorpusDK). The overlap between *hvor* and *hvordan* can be explained historically, where *hvor* was originally also a manner adverb (potentially related to *hvordan*, ODS). In section 4, I will explore the distribution of the different words across the contexts described by Zevakhina (2016).

While not being a question word, *sikke* is also found to be a marker of exclamatives:

- (14) *Sikke nogle dejlige desserter I laver*  
SIKKE some lovely desserts you make  
“What lovely desserts you make!”

(KorpusDK)

I was not able to find or construct any exclamative sentences with other of the question words. In some cases, I came across questions that could be interpreted as exclamations, i.e. rhetorical questions:

- (15) *Hvad i alverden er det for et budskab?*  
what in world is it for a message  
“What in the whole world is that kind of a message?”

(KorpusDK)

(15) uses *hvad* together with the phrase *i alverden* ‘in the (whole) world’, which seems to take part in the interpretation of the question as rhetorical and exclamative (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:604). I have not taken this type of exclamatives into account, since the exclamative property is not a coded feature of the words or structure in the cases, and they are not insubordinated.

Clauses with *hvem* ‘who’ that could be understood as exclamations were also found:

- (16) *Hvem der bare havde en kone*  
who that just had a wife  
“I wish I had a wife!”

(KorpusDK)

The *hvem* in (16) is used euphemistically to refer to the speaker, i.e. comparable to rhetorical questions and some uses of *man* ‘one’ (Bruun 2019), but differs from independent questions exactly through word order, i.e. by having a separate subject position (which here has to be filled by the dummy *der* since the conjunctive field contains the subject) and placing the adverb *bare* ‘just’ before the verb. Such usages have been interpreted as exclamatives (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:1161), but they do not correspond to any of the exclamatives with *who* discussed in Nouwen & Chernilovskaya (2015). It can be seen as a case of insubordination, e.g. containing only the subordinate part of ‘whoever



had a wife would be happy' which can express a wish for a wife. However, this type of construction is outside the scope of this study.

On the basis of the above, we can state that Danish uses *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* as markers of exclamatives. *Hvordan* is also used in one specific construction. On the basis of this, I choose to look further at the variation in terms of word order within constructions with *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* in the next section, and how they are distributed across the contexts described by Zevakhina (2016).

#### 4 Variation within exclamative constructions

In this section, I describe each construction in terms of word order and phrasal continuity across the contexts from Zevakhina (2016). Based on the findings in the section above, I have chosen to focus on *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* as exclamatives.

##### 4.1 *hvor*

*Hvor* is used in all contexts except (ii): question word + noun without adjective, and I will show how it also varies the most in terms of the word orders it can be used in.

Context (i): question word + adjective + noun shows all possible variation, both in terms of word order and of phrasal continuity. Examples (17) and (18) illustrate the continuous noun phrase across the neutral and declarative word orders.

(17) *Hvor flot enudsigt de sidste små huse [...] fik*  
 how beautiful a view the last smallhouses [...] got  
*forærende.*

giving

"What a beautiful view the last small houses were given!"

(KorpusDK)

(18) *Men hvor pragtfuld en sangerinde var dog*  
 but how magnificent a singer was PRT  
*Gundula Janowitz.*

NAME

"But what a magnificent singer Gundula Janowitz was!"

(KorpusDK)

In (17), the preposed phrase consists of the noun phrase *hvor flot en udsigt* 'how beautiful a view', and it is followed immediately by the subject noun phrase in *de sidste små huse* 'the last small houses' (part of the noun phrase has been omitted), then followed by the finite verb, construing the neutral word order. The preposed noun phrase has *hvor* initially, followed by an adjective, and then indefinite article and noun, i.e. they all occur together, but the indefinite article is after the adjective. (18) starts with a noun phrase *hvor pragtfuld en sangerinde* 'how magnificent a singer' including the question word, immediately followed by the finite copula verb *var*, and thus displays V2 word order. The preposed noun phrase has the same word order as (17).

In both cases, *hvor* forms an adjective phrase with the immediately following adjective, i.e. *flot* 'beautiful' and *pragtfuld* 'magnificent'. However, this means that the adjective itself is discontinuous within the noun phrase or at least is placed differently from the common location of adjectives in Danish noun phrases – after the indefinite article and before the noun. Compare with *en flot udsigt* 'a beautiful view' and *en pragtfuld sangerinde* 'a magnificent singer', where the adjectives occur between the indefinite article and noun. The noun phrase is still preposed together with *hvor*. Adjective before indefinite article seems to be the only order in cases with *hvor* when preposed.

The noun phrase with its adjective does not need to be preposed, however:

- (19) *Hvor det dog er en smuk julebuk!*  
how it PRT is a beautiful christmas.goat  
"What a beautiful Christmas goat that is!"

(KorpusDK)

- (20) *Hvor ender vi med en moralsk amerikansk pave [...]*  
how end we with a moral American pope  
"What a moral, American pope we will end up with!"

(KorpusDK)

Examples (19) and (20) have an initial *hvor* while the object of exclamation is placed where it usually would be in the clause. In (19), the *hvor* alone takes up the first slot, followed by a pronoun *det* 'it' and adverb before the finite verb, building V4 and thus the neutral word order. Here *hvor* belongs together with the predicative noun phrase

*en smuk julebuk* 'a beautiful Christmas goat', where it modifies the adjective *smuk* 'beautiful'. In (20), *hvor* is followed directly by the finite verb *ender* 'end', thereby using V2. The phrase modified by *hvor* in (20) actually includes two adjectives – *moralsk* 'moral' and *amerikansk* 'American' – as part of the noun phrase *en moralsk amerikansk pave* 'a moral, American pope'. Note that this noun phrase is part of a prepositional object with the preposition *med* 'with', as required by *ender*.

Context (i): question word + adjective + noun thus displays all four logically possible combinations of word order and phrasal (dis)continuity.

Context (iii): question word + predicative adjective does almost the same. Phrasal discontinuity is possible with both V2 and neutral word order:

(21) *Hvor er det dog livsbekræftende*  
 how is it PRT life.affirming  
 "How life-affirming it is!"

(KorpusDK)

(22) *Hvor den er særpræget*  
 how it is peculiar  
 "How peculiar it is!"

(KorpusDK)

In both (21) and (22), *hvor* is initial in the clause, while the predicative adjective is placed later after the verb, subject and particles. In (21), the verb *er* 'is' immediately follows *hvor*, making this clause V2, and the initial *hvor* modifies the predicative adjective *livsbekræftende* 'life-affirming' occurring at the end. In (22) the subject *den* 'it' follows *hvor*, creating the neutral word order, while the adjective modified by *hvor* is the later occurring *særpræget* 'peculiar'.

Continuous phrases with the neutral word order were found easily:

(23) *Hvor kønne vore landdistrikter er*  
 how pretty our country.districts are  
 "How pretty our country districts are!"

(KorpusDK)

In (23), *hvor* is continuous with the adjective in the phrase *hvor kønne* 'how pretty', which is placed initially. It is followed by the subject *vore*

*landdistrikter* ‘our country districts’, and then the finite verb *er* ‘is’, thus being constructed with the neutral word order.

V2 with a continuous phrase was more difficult to find exclamations with, because it is identical to questions:

(24) *Hvor stor er dog din godhed*  
how big is PRT your goodness  
“How great your goodness is!”

(Psalm 31:19, through KorpusDK)

In (24), the continuous adjective phrase *hvor stor* ‘how great’ is followed by the finite verb *er* ‘is’, making it V2. A further look at the entry in KorpusDK reveals that it is a bible quote. I was able to find a better case:

(25) *Hvor tryk føler man sig ikke i selskab*  
how safe feels one REFL not in company  
*med Per Wiking og Kvit eller Dobbelt*  
with NAME and NAME OF TV PROGRAM  
“How safe one feels in company with Per Wiking and The  
\$64,000 Question!”<sup>1</sup>

(KorpusDK)

(25) starts with the continuous adjective phrase *hvor tryk* ‘how safe’ followed by the verb *føler* ‘feels’, thereby achieving V2. The construction *føle sig* is not a prototypical copula verb, but the adjective *tryk* does not have the adverbial form.

Both (24) and (25) rely somewhat on context in being interpreted as an exclamation rather than question. The use of *dog*, which seems to be common in exclamatives, in (24) also pushes towards an exclamative interpretation. The negation in (25) also pushes the interpretation towards exclamation, but it does not categorically exclude question interpretation without the context – where the author is describing conflict-free TV. A somewhat common phrase with the same syntax as (24) and (25) is the rhetorical question *hvor dum kan man være* ‘how stupid can one be’.

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<sup>1</sup> A translation preserving the negation could be “doesn’t one feel safe [...]?” or potentially “how safe doesn’t one feel [...]!”.

In context (iv), i.e. with *hvor* modifying an adverb, V2 can be found:

- (26) *Ih, hvor vil jeg også gerne se dig igen*  
 INTERJ how will I also readily see you again  
 "Oh, how I also want to see you again!"

(KorpusDK)

In (26), *hvor* is followed immediately by the finite verb *vil* 'will', making it V2, but *hvor* modifies the adverb *gerne* 'readily', which is placed later becoming discontinuous. It is possible with a continuous phrase though:

- (27) *Hvor gerne ville jeg ikke give et digteksperiment et  
 how readily would I not give a poetry.experiment a  
 godt ord  
 goodword  
 "How I'd like to give a poetry experiment a good word!"*

(KorpusDK)

The same phrase *hvor gerne* 'how readily' is found in (27), now continuous, in initial position. (27) also has V2 word order, since *hvor gerne* is followed by the finite verb.

The neutral word order was also found in context (iv), but it was difficult to find other examples than discontinuous ones:

- (28) *Hvor de dog udtrykker sig smukt*  
 How they PRT express REFL beautifully  
 "How beautifully they express themselves!"

(KorpusDK)

Example (28) contains an initial *hvor* modifying the adverb *smukt* 'beautifully' later in the clause. *Hvor* is immediately followed by the subject, then adverb, and in fourth slot the verb, thus fitting into the neutral word order. Continuous cases are difficult to find because they have the same form as subordinate interrogative clauses, but I did manage to find one case:

- (29) *Hvor heldigt, jeg traf Dem!*  
 how luckily I met you  
 "How lucky I met you!"

(KorpusDK)



(29) starts with the continuous adverbial phrase *hvor heldigt* 'how lucky', followed by the subject and then the verb, providing the neutral word order. An alternative interpretation would see (29) as having two units: a phrasal exclamative *hvor heldigt* followed by a declarative clause (presumably why the author put a comma). This would be in line with interjections being able to be turn-initial and exclamatives (especially phrasal ones) being able to function like interjections. The placement of an adverb would be able to disambiguate this, e.g. if the adverb is placed between *jeg* and *traf*, the result cannot be a declarative clause on its own. I believe such placing is possible and would be the most natural here. It may exist in the corpus, if one could more easily distinguish independent and subordinate uses.

Context (v) – no adverb or adjective – uses both V2 and neutral word order. Continuity is not relevant for this type, as *hvor* is not modifying a specific phrase.

(30) *Hvor ville jeg nyde at droppe den sædvanlige*  
how would I enjoy to drop the usual  
*sportsbeklædning [...]*  
sports.clothing  
"How I would enjoy dropping the usual sports clothing!"  
(KorpusDK)

(31) *Se, hvor jeg kan!*  
look how I can  
"Watch me!"  
(KorpusDK)

In (30) and (31), *hvor* is not modifying any adverb or adjective as there are none, instead it can be said to be modifying the verb directly. Where (30) has the finite verb *ville* 'would' right after *hvor* and thus constitutes V2 word order, *hvor* in (31) is followed immediately by the subject *jeg* 'I', i.e. using the neutral word order (compare with (13) using the same verb, but with V2).

One could argue that the construction in (31) consists of a matrix clause in *se* 'look' with a complement clause. But exchanging *se* with a synonym like *kigge* 'look' is not attested and the construction with *se* works like a fixed expression, comparable to those with an interjection, e.g. (26) or *nej* in (11). While *se* must have been a main clause at

some point, it has frozen in this construction like *tænk* 'think' in insubordinated constructions with *tænk at* lit. 'think that' (Heltoft 2007). The matrix clause is also not obligatory (but important to note in the context of insubordination), as shown by example (32), which does not have *se* or any other possible matrix clause, but still the neutral word order:

- (32) *Hvor man dog kan genkende det.*  
 how one PRT can recognize it  
 "How one can recognize it!"

(KorpusDK)

In (32) the subject is *man* (generic pronoun) and follows *hvor* immediately, and the verb only occurs in the fourth slot.

#### 4.2 *hvilken*

In this section, I will go through the relevant exclamative constructions with *hvilken*, which we will see occurs in a more restricted set of contexts than *hvor*.

In context (i): question word + adjective + noun, it is possible to find both V2 and neutral word order:

- (33) *Hvilken ond skæbne havde udtænkt denne juleaften*  
 which evil destiny had devised this christmas.eve  
 "What an evil destiny that planned this Christmas Eve!"

(KorpusDK)

- (34) *Hvilken ubehagelig opgave han havde påtaget sig*  
 which unpleasant task he had taken REFL  
 "What an unpleasant task he had taken upon him!"

(KorpusDK)

In (33), *hvilken* is placed initially in the phrase *hvilken ond skæbne* 'what an evil destiny', where *ond* 'evil' is the adjective and *skæbne* 'destiny' is the noun. After the noun phrase, the finite verb follows, and the sentence thus follows the V2 word order. Note that this can in principle also be interpreted as a question ('Which evil destiny [...]?'). (34) consists of the initial phrase *hvilken ubehagelig opgave* 'what an unpleasant task', where the adjective is *ubehagelig* 'unpleasant' and the noun is *opgave* 'task', then the subject pronoun *han* 'he' and only then the

finite verb *havde* 'had'. This means that the clause uses the neutral word order.

Context (ii): question word + noun mirrors (i) by having both V2 and neutral word order, the only difference being that there is no adjective:

- (35) *Hvilken fryd må det ikke være at blive genstand*  
which joy may it not be to become object  
*for så meget ros*  
of so much praise  
"What a joy it must be to be the subject of so much praise!"  
(KorpusDK)

- (36) *Hvilken befrielse det er at kunne komme hjem og*  
which liberation it is to can come home and  
*sige [...]*  
say  
"What a release it is to be able to come home and say [...]"  
(KorpusDK)

In (35), the initial phrase consists of *hvilken* and the noun *fryd* 'joy', followed by the finite verb *må* 'must' and then the subject, i.e. the V2 word order. In (36), *hvilken befrielse* 'what a release' takes up the initial phrase and is followed immediately by the subject *det* 'it' and finite verb *er* 'is', following the neutral word order.

No instances of the remaining contexts (iii-v) have been found. They are impossible since *hvilken* requires a noun phrase. I have also not been able to find any discontinuous adjectives in exclamatives with *hvilken*. Note also that *hvilken* takes the place of the indefinite article in the noun phrase, in contrast to the English *what a(n)*, which means there is no variable placement of articles.

#### 4.3 *sikke*

*Sikke* is a word that is also used in exclamatives – sometimes called a particle (Heltoft 2007) and sometimes an adjective (DDO). It is exclusively used for exclamation and does not occur in subordinate clauses or other constructions. Historically, it is derived from *se* 'look' and *hvilken* 'which', i.e. the word that was the topic of the previous section. However, *sikke* is based on a spoken language form *hvikken* that has since disappeared (Heltoft 2007). *Sikke* is sometimes inflected with

*sikken* being the common form, *sikken* the neuter form and *sikke* the plural form. The inflection can be seen as a contraction of *sikke* and the indefinite article *en* or *et* (DDO). However, both *sikke* and *sikken* are frequently used in contexts where one cannot speak of agreement, and there is large variation in how the different forms are and have been used (Heltoft 2007). Hansen & Heltoft (2011:1156-1158) distinguish particle usage (in the conjunctive field) from usage in constructions consisting of only a noun phrase. The variation between forms of *sikke* is outside the scope of the present article.

In context (i): question word + adjective + noun, there is only evidence for continuous phrases and the neutral word order.

- (37) *Sikke en dejlig, fyldig en du har.*  
 SIKKE a nice ample one you have  
 "What a nice, ample one you have!"

(KorpusDK)

- (38) *Sikke en masse renter han ellers ville gå  
 glip af*  
 SIKKE a lot interests he otherwise would go  
 miss off  
 "What a lot of interests he would otherwise miss!"

(KorpusDK)

In both (37) and (38), the phrase with *sikke* occurs initially and contains adjectives. In (37), the adjectives are *dejlig* 'lovely' and *fyldig* 'full', while in (38) it is *masse* 'mass', which is actually a noun, but functions as a modifier through its use as a quantifier in the same position as an adjective in the meaning 'a lot'. This is interesting because my impression is that *masse* is not used and would be ungrammatical in constructions with *hvilken*. Both (37) and (38) have subject pronouns following the initial phrase, *du* 'you' and *han* 'he' respectively, which make them fit the pattern of the neutral word order. I have not been able to find any of the discontinuous constructions in KorpusDK (e.g., *sikke dejlig en [...]* or *sikke du har en dejlig [...]*), but I return to this with an example from a previous description.

The same properties are found in context (ii): question word + noun:

(39) *Sikke en trængsel I har her i kolonien!*  
SIKKE a crowd you have here in colony.DEF  
“What crowding you have here in the colony!”

(KorpusDK)

In (39), *sikke* is followed by the noun phrase *en trængsel* ‘a crowd’, and then the subject, the pronoun *I* ‘you (plural)’, and the finite verb *har* ‘have’, again showing the neutral word order.

Context (iii): question word + predicative adjective behaves as the others:

(40) *Sikke smukke de er.*  
SIKKE beautiful they are  
“How beautiful they are!”

(KorpusDK)

The adjective *smukke* ‘beautiful’ in (40) is placed initially together with *sikke*, followed by the subject pronoun *de* ‘they’ and the finite verb *er* ‘is’; again, forming neutral word order.

Context (iv): question word + adverbial has the adverbial phrase in the same place:

(41) *Og sikke hurtigt hun kunne snakke.*  
and SIKKE quickly she could talk  
“And how quickly she could speak!”

(KorpusDK)

In (41), the content verb *snakke* ‘speak, talk’ does not take a predicative adjective, but can be modified by adverbial phrases. The adverbial in (41) is *hurtigt* ‘quickly’ (i.e., the adjective *hurtig* inflected for adverbial use through *-t*). It is placed right after *sikke*. The sentence is again using the neutral word order by placing the finite verb *kunne* ‘could’ after the subject *hun* ‘she’.

Finally, context (v) – no adverb or adjective – displays the same features.

(42) *Sikke vi kan*  
SIKKE we can  
“How we can do it!”

(KorpusDK)



There are neither nouns, adjectives nor adverbs in (42). Immediately following *sikke* is the subject *vi* 'we' and verb *kan* 'can', forming the neutral word order again (compare with (13) and (31) for other exclamatives with *kan*).

We have seen that all cases with indefinite articles place it immediately following *sikke* and before the adjective. However, Heltoft (2007) provides an instance of the indefinite article placed after an adjective (but does not discuss this variation):

(43) *Sikke kvik en dreng*  
 SIKKE quick a boy  
 "What a quick boy!"

(Heltoft 2007:37)

While (43) cannot be discontinuous as it only contains a phrase, it illustrates an adjective placed immediately following *sikke*, in contrast to (37-39), but in line with cases with *hvor* as in (17-18). Being phrasal, it is not within scope of this article, but should be seen in relation to context (i).

I was not able to find any discontinuous cases where the modified element occurred later in the clause. However, Delsing provides the following example:

(44) *Sikke du kender mange mennesker!*  
 SIKKE you know many people  
 "What a lot of people you know!"

(Delsing 2010:30)

Here, *sikke* is as always placed initially, but it is followed by the subject *du* 'you' and the verb *kender* 'know' before the quantifier *mange* 'many' which is what *sikke* modifies. It is still using the neutral word order, but the noun phrase is not preposed. I am not sure how productive this formation is.

#### 4.4 Summary

The data shows variation in word order and continuity, but not the same variation across the different exclamative words. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of V2 word order and neutral word order of *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke*.

Contexts	(i) Q+A+N	(ii) Q+N	(iii) Q+A	(iv) Q+ADV	(iv) Q+V
<i>hvor</i>	Both	-	Both	Both	Both
<i>hvilken</i>	Both	Both	-	-	-
<i>sikke</i>	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

Table 3. Distribution of neutral or V2 word order.

Empty cells (marked -) in the table are those contexts that are non-occurring or ungrammatical. The findings suggest that V2 never occurs alone, and that only *sikke* is used with the neutral word order without the possibility of being used with V2. It can also be seen that none of the words show any word order differences between the contexts.

Table 4 summarizes the distribution of noun phrase (dis)continuity:

Contexts	(i)	(iii)	(iv)
<i>hvor</i>	Both	Both	Both
<i>hvilken</i>	Cont	-	-
<i>sikke</i>	Cont <sup>2</sup>	Cont	Cont

Table 4. Distribution of phrasal continuity.

Continuity can only exist in contexts (i), (iii) and (iv), i.e. those with a modifier. As with the word order of the clause, *hvor* is variable regarding continuity (marked *both*). However, while *hvilken* could have both word orders, they always contain continuous phrases (marked *cont*). Discontinuous phrases seem to occur only in constructions with *hvor*, while *sikke* and *hvilken* both have continuous phrases only. Regarding the order of indefinite article and adjective in context (i), the three words follow different patterns: *hvor* always occurs with adjective before indefinite article, *hvilken* usually has no indefinite article, and *sikke* has the opposite pattern of *hvor* with indefinite article before adjective (with possible potential for exceptions as seen in (43)). There is then no direct relation between the word order of the clause and the phrase.

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<sup>2</sup> With the possible exception of the one example in Delsing (2010:30).

## 5 Discussion

Danish independent exclamative clauses with *hvor*, *hvilken* and *sikke* share some features with subordinate clauses, and can be treated as cases of insubordination. This supports the hypothesis by Evans (2007) that independent exclamatives have diachronic origins as subordinate clauses.

The etymology of *sikke* somewhat challenges the categories that insubordination is based on. It confirms the above description since it behaves very much like *hvilken* and fits into a pattern where neutral (aka *subordinate*) word order originally marked subordination; word order variation with *sikke* is more limited than the others, but the word is used in all types of exclamatives, which suggests that it has grammaticalized specifically for exclamation beyond the contexts of its source form. It is not clear whether any matrix clause can be said to have been ‘left out’, since *sikke* has been reduced from *se hvilke(n)* ‘look which’ and become one unit with what was originally a question word. This implies that ‘light’ matrix clauses such as *se* can play an important role in the process of insubordination. Light matrix clauses also exist in other insubordinated clauses, for instance *tænk* ‘think’ in conditionals (D’Hertefelt 2018: 55) and *sæt* ‘put down, place, set up, imagine’ (Heltoft 2007:18).

Zevakhina (2016) hypothesizes that the syntax of independent exclamative constructions shows the same structure as their subordinate counterparts. This is true in the sense that all types of exclamative constructions allow the neutral word order to be used, though some also allow further options, such as V2 and certain specific constructions. The question is then whether this is because the use of V2 word order has spread to these ‘new’ types of independent clauses, or because of a relationship to rhetorical questions (or both). Discontinuous phrases also seem to be a factor in the separation of exclamatives as a group, at least to distinguish them from questions.

Regarding distribution across the contexts, Zevakhina (2016) concludes that quantitative question words occur in contexts (iii-iv) and (i). This is also the case in Danish, but *hvor* also seems to occur in context (v). This can be explained diachronically, since *hvor* once was a manner adverb (cf. ODS), a usage that was later replaced by *hvordan* – except in the use of *hvor* in context (v), where it is not clear if *hvordan* is used outside fixed expressions. The exclamative use may be a factor in preserving the manner adverbial use of *hvor*. *Hvilken* also confirms

the distinction between contexts (i-ii) and (iii-v) mentioned in Zevakhina (2016), as *hvilken* only occurs in contexts (i-ii). Based on *hvor*, one could construct a coexpression diagram in which there is a path directly between (i) and (iii).

The words also provide information about directions of grammaticalization. The etymology of *hvor* is that it stems from an adverbial form of the same root behind *hvem*, according to DDO. However, ODS also mentions that the word may have coalesced with other question word formations, but that it became a manner adverb, where it also developed a use in exclamative constructions (ODS). Now *hvor* is not used as a manner adverb, but in senses of location and quantity. Despite this, *hvor* can still be used exclamatively in context (v) like manner adverbials. This means that a word can keep its exclamative use, even when the basis of the grammaticalization of exclamatives changes, i.e. it is an independent function and the relation is not productive anymore.

In the case of *sikke*, it was also shown that a word can grammaticalize from being a question word into being only an exclamative marker. Knowing that *sikke* stems from *hvilken*, it seems possible that the available contexts can broaden over time, from *hvilken* only being used in contexts (i-ii) to *sikke* being used in all contexts.

In comparison with Swedish (Delsing 2010), Danish *hvor* seems to have no direct equivalent in Swedish: *vad* seems to have the same functions as *hvor* except context (v) which is instead covered by *hur*. Swedish *vilken* corresponds well to Danish *hvilken*. Swedish has *sicken*, but a full comparison with *sikke* needs further cases from Swedish to be conducted.

Research on insubordination has investigated types such as complement insubordination and conditional insubordination, but this study shows the importance of distinguishing between the (re-)grammaticalization of different types of markers like word order features, complementizers or question words, whose relations to clause types can be complex. This study also points towards some questions that might be answered through diachronic corpus studies, e.g. the importance of light matrix clauses in insubordination.

## 6 Conclusion

This article has described the possible exclamatives with question words and the syntactic contexts of exclamatives involving *sikke*, *hvilken* and *hvor* in Danish. Only those three words clearly function productively as markers of exclamatives.

It was shown that exclamatives in Danish are affected by the same rules of placement of question words in questions, except when it comes to the continuity of phrases. Some elements in questions must be continuous with the question word, while exclamatives can allow discontinuity instead. Relevant claims by Zevakhina (2016) were tested against the Danish data and confirmed.

On the basis of the descriptions, I discussed the historical relationship between some of the exclamatives, i.e. *sikke* as deriving from *hvilken* and *hvor* overlapping with *hvordan*. They show that question words used in exclamative constructions are not obligatorily bound to their use in other types of clauses, e.g. questions.

These findings shed light on new or other possible factors in the process of insubordination, such as the discontinuous phrases and fusion of matrix clause elements as in *sikke*. Some of the questions opened by this study need more detailed diachronic evidence to be answered, but the peculiarity of some of the constructions has been made evident and more fit for comparison with other languages.

## 7 Epilogue

This article is based on an exam paper written in the spring of 2016, right before starting as a PhD student working on something very different in a very different way. The original paper was in fact hastily finished up during my “free time” from a weekend at Northside Festival, as I had to confirm that I wanted the PhD position, which required me to show that I would finish exams on time, which meant before the following Tuesday.

Much time has passed since then. And much has happened in the research on insubordination, which I have not been able to handle fully. The current version has been updated in various ways, including references to literature (Zevakhina 2016 was a preprint, D’Hertefelt was not the published book).

Originally, I wanted to incorporate instances from conversational data like the Danish *Samtalebanken* (MacWhinney & Wagner 2010),



but instances were too difficult to find in any reliable way. As pointed out by Heine et al. (2020), phrasal exclamatives are in fact more common than clausal ones, and whenever I thought I had found something in the conversations, the instance was a phrasal case, often *hvor* followed by an adjective – a known assessment format (Garly 2019:48). It would be extremely interesting to look in depth at this in spoken Danish, especially how the clausal constructions relate to *sikke* or *hvor* as phrasal exclamatives, or how the phrasality relates to the grammaticalization as exclamative markers specifically. This could be related to turntaking, as a *hvor*-phrase is often (at least when not discontinuous) initial and could be understood as projecting the rest in some cases. However, the current article has ended up being based on written language. Trying to collect both written and spoken language would likely create a situation where most cases in the spoken data would be phrasal, and most cases in the written data would be clausal, which would be an unfortunate comparison (and not able to say much about word order in the clause). The idea with this article was to pave the way for future conversational or interactional studies on the investigated features. There is much to say about them and that deserves its own study, which could then be compared with the examples shown in this article. Such studies could inform the relation between written and spoken language, besides the specific linguistic constructions and material investigated or mentioned in the article.

Interactionally, it is worth noting that many exclamatives perform assessments (Pfeiffer 2016), and the relation between exclamatives and affective interjections has been acknowledged (Michaelis 2001). Another feature not possible to handle with written data is stress placement, which in exclamatives would be relevant to study more in detail. I expect that stress is regularly placed on the finite verb, which would be in contrast to many non-exclamative clauses. Overall, the relation between clausal assessments and other non-clausal assessment features (e.g., freestanding adjectives or nouns, or with non-finite modification like *sikke* and *hvor*) would be informative for the description of attitudinal modification (Rijkhoff 2014) and how assessment systems work. I also hope this study can inform the question of the role of other features of assessments than the assessment term itself, since it is also known that assessments can be done without it (Park & Kline 2020, Aldrup et al. 2021).

In prolongation of these points, it is also worth noting that insubordination has received interactional treatment (Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2023, and the references therein).

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