

Semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian: formal, semantic and functional properties

Karin Beijering

This paper reports on a corpus investigation of one type of semi-insubordination in Norwegian, viz. semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses. That is, constructions that consist of a subordinate *at*-clause which is preceded by just one element.

The study offers an overview of possible initial constituents in this construction on the basis of spoken and written corpus data. The data show that there are basically two types of initial elements in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions: evaluative and discursive ones. The former include ‘minimal matrices’ conveying the speaker’s attitudinal assessment of the *at*-clause. The latter comprises rhetoric elements denoting the speaker’s reasoning towards the *at*-clause in relation to prior discourse.

Semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses are problematic for traditional syntactic analyses as these constructions extend beyond the sentence level. Syntactically they are independent clauses, but pragmatically they are heavily dependent on prior context. It will therefore be argued that semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses are best accounted for as a discourse level phenomenon.

Keywords: corpus investigation, discourse, main and subordinate clauses, minimal matrix, Norwegian, semi-insubordination, subordination, syntax

1 Introduction

This study is concerned with one type of semi-insubordination in Norwegian, viz. semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses.¹ That is, constructions in which a subordinate *at*-clause is preceded by one element only, as in the examples in (1).

1. Subordinate clauses introduced by *om* ‘if’ may also be preceded by just one element (e.g. *Fint om noen kan hjelpe meg!* ‘It would be nice if someone could help me!’; NoWaC).

- (1) a. **Flott** *at det gikk bra med prøven!* (NoWaC)²
lit. ‘Great that it went well with the test!’
- b. **Kanskje** *at det tar litt lang tid.* (NoWaC)
lit. ‘Perhaps that it takes a little long time.’

The concept of semi-insubordination is closely linked to the notion of insubordination. Insubordination is “the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses” (Evans 2007: 367). Instances of insubordinate constructions include, amongst others, subordinate *at*-clauses without an identifiable matrix clause as in the examples in (2).³

- (2) a. **At** *du vil gjøre det!* (Faarlund et al. 1997: 864)⁴
lit. ‘That you want do that!’
- b. *em ## at em # ja # folk er litt fisefine kanskje noen ganger # at det er litt sånn for konservativt* (NoTa-Oslo)
lit. ‘Em... that em ... yes ... people are perhaps a little bit condescending sometimes... that it is like a little too conservative.’

D’Hertefelt & Verstraete (2014) make a distinction between ‘expressive’ and ‘elaborative’ insubordinate *at*-constructions.⁵ The former express “the speaker’s evaluation of a presupposed state of affairs”, as in (2a), and the latter “elaborate on an aspect of the preceding discourse”, as in (2b), (ibid: 89). Constructions like (2a) are syntactically and pragmatically independent whereas constructions such as (2b) are never pragmatically independent (ibid: 100).

Both insubordination and semi-insubordination are instances of the broader phenomenon of (semi-)autonomous subordination (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 226). In this paper, the working definition of semi-insubordination is the characterization proposed by Van linden & Van de Velde (2014: 231) in (3).

2. Norwegian Web as Corpus (cf. Guevara 2010), < <http://www.hf.uio.no/iln/tjenester/kunnskap/sprak/korpus/skriftsprakskorpus/nowac/index.html> >

3. For more examples of insubordinate constructions see Evans (2007).

4. NB. Faarlund et al. do not use this terminology. They refer to insubordinate *at*-clauses as ‘exclamations’.

5. D’Hertefelt & Verstraete (2014) use the term ‘independent complement constructions’ to refer to insubordinate *at*-clauses.

- (3) [C]onstructions [which] consist of a subordinate *dat*-clause that is preceded by just a [sic.] one element which seems to function at matrix clause level. Crucially, this element conveys the attitudinal (including epistemic) assessment of the propositional content expressed in the *dat*-clause.⁶

Semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions may be introduced by adjectival, adverbial and nominal elements expressing epistemic (e.g. *maybe*), evaluative (e.g. *no wonder*) or affective⁷ (e.g. *glad*) meanings (ibid: 247). These initial constituents all express various types of interpersonal meaning.⁸ In addition, semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions are often used with exclamative illocutionary force to firmly express the speaker's emotional stance towards the *at*-clause (cf. example (1a)).⁹ In spoken language the speaker's emotional involvement is prosodically marked by exclamative intonation, in written language it is signaled by an exclamation mark.

The aim of this study is to give an overview of the range of possible initial elements in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian. More specifically, on the basis of spoken and written corpus data it will be investigated which elements can occur as the first constituent in this construction type. The outcome of the corpus investigation serves as a basis for the description of the prototypical grammatical, semantic and discursive properties of semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses in Norwegian.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews previous studies on semi-insubordinate and related constructions in the Mainland Scandinavian languages. The method and sources used in this study are described in Section

6. This characterization is formulated for Dutch, but is also applicable to other Germanic languages. The conjunction *dat* 'that' corresponds to Norwegian *at* 'that'.

7. That is, the speaker's psychological state (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 233).

8. Interpersonal meanings include "deontic, directive, epistemic, and evaluative meaning (cf. McGregor 1997:74, 209-251), as well as discursive meanings" (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 228).

9. Exclamative semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions differ from the exclamative constructions discussed in Delsing (2010). He defines exclamatives pragmatically as "a speech act which contains an assertion, and where there is a mismatch between this assertion and a presupposition" (ibid: 16). Moreover, the assertion in an exclamative is typically scalar in that it expresses a higher degree than expected, as for example in *Vilken trevlig hatt du har!* lit. 'Which nice hat you have!' On this view, constructions like (1a) would be excluded from exclamatives on similar grounds as the expression *Trevlig hatt du har!* lit. 'Nice hat you have!' is not considered an exclamative because there is no 'hidden expectation' and it is not scalar (ibid: 20). NB the example in (2a) is an instance of a 'polar exclamative' (ibid:17).

3. In Section 4, the results of the corpus investigation are discussed and illustrated with examples. Section 5 contains a concluding discussion of the prototypical formal, semantic and discursive properties of semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian.

2 Preliminaries – literature review

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in insubordination and related phenomena (cf. Evans & Watanabe (2016) and references therein). Semi-insubordination, however, remains an under described phenomenon in the literature. For the Scandinavian languages, a number of interesting observations related to semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses have been made in the context of the *plus(s) at(t)*-construction (Nørgård-Sørensen 2001; Julien 2009) and *så att* ‘so that’, *för att* ‘because that’ and *men att* ‘but that’ clauses (Lindström & Londen 2008).

There are basically three different views on the structural status of constructions that contain a subordinate *at*-clause which is headed by just one element: i) the whole construction is a main clause in which the *at*-clause is subordinated to a one-word matrix clause (Julien 2009), ii) the construction is a dependent clause which is subordinated to an implicit neustic ‘I say so’ component (Nørgård-Sørensen 2001), or iii) these constructions function as continuations or additional comments to a prior assertion and are dependent on a discursal antecedent (Lindström & Londen 2008). These different analyses will be discussed in more detail in subsections 2.1 and 2.2.

2.1 The *plus(s) at(t)*-construction

Both Nørgård-Sørensen (2001) and Julien (2009) studied the peculiar properties of the so-called *plus(s) at(t)*-construction. Like the *kanskje at*-clause in example (1b), the *plus(s) at(t)*-construction contains a subordinate *at*-clause which is headed by just one element (i.e. *pluss* ‘plus / in addition’). It differs from the example in (1b) in that *pluss* does not convey the speaker’s attitudinal (epistemic) assessment of the *at*-clause; rather it introduces a supplement to a prior statement. A Norwegian example of the *plus(s) at(t)*-construction is presented in (4).

- (4) *Vi prøver å finne ut hva vi skal bli. **Pluss at** vi vil ha det gøy, og bli kjent med nye folk, og oppleve og erfare nye ting.*¹⁰ (Julien 2009: 127)
lit. 'We try to find out what we want to be. Plus that we want to have a good time, and meet new people, and to encounter and experience new things.'

According to Julien (2009: 124), "the whole *plus(s) at(t)*-construction is a main clause where *plus(s)* represents the matrix clause while the subordinator that follows introduces an ordinary embedded clause." She notes that other elements in addition to *plus(s)* may also function as 'one-word matrix clauses'. These include *men* 'but', *hoppas* 'hope-1SG', *dumt* 'foolish', *trist* 'sad', *synd* 'a pity' and *tur* 'luck' (ibid: 139). Some of these minimal matrices can be further modified (e.g. *lite synd* 'a little pity', *verkligen tur* 'sheer luck').

There is one crucial difference for the possible minimal matrices she identified. The adjectival, nominal and verbal initial elements seem to be elliptical matrix clauses, whereas for elements such as *men* and *plus(s)* it is unclear whether they have a full clause structure or constitute truly minimal matrix clauses (ibid: 124). The syntactic structure of the construction, in which one-word matrices take the position of *plus*, is represented in (5).

- (5) [...*plus*...[*att* ...]] (Julien 2009: 132)

In line with Stroh-Wollin (2008a; 2008b), Julien notices one property that all minimal matrices have in common: they express the illocutionary force of the utterance. For example, *at(t)*-clauses introduced by an interjection (e.g. *førbaske mig* 'damn me') express exclamative illocution. Initial modal expressions (e.g. *sannerliggen* 'truly, indeed') denote 'some kind of assertion' which can be interpreted as declarative illocution. Likewise, *plus(s) at(t)*-clauses can be considered to express declarative illocution (Julien 2009: 135).

One more remarkable property of semi-insubordinate *at(t)*-constructions concerns the optionality of the subordinator *at(t)*. Hellberg (2001) analyzes constructions like (6a) as simple main clauses with an initial speech-act marker. Insertion of *att* 'that' would not be possible in these constructions. This analysis is challenged by Julien (2009) by means of a number of authentic examples of similar utterances with *att*, as in example (6b).

10. www.kig.no/Jente2002/blodsminke.htm (last accessed by Julien 22-12-2008).

- (6) a. *Klart man blir förbannad.* (Hellberg 2001: 62)
lit. 'Of course one will be cursed.'
- b. *Klart att man kan stoppa kniven i munnen!* (Julien 2009: 137)
lit. 'Of course you can shove the knife in your mouth!'

On the basis of counterexamples like (6b), she concludes that constructions such as (6a) are the result of 'att-deletion'. On this view, constructions like (6a) also contain an (implicit) dependent clause. However, the subordinate status of the dependent clause becomes only syntactically manifest in presence of a negation marker or sentence adverb in between the subject and finite verb (e.g. *Kanskje man aldri ville oppdaget det* 'Maybe one would never find out about this', LBK).

Nørgård-Sørensen (2001) proposes a different analysis of *plus(s)-at(t)*-constructions. He does not conceive of *plus* as a minimal matrix for the subordinate *at*-clause, but analyzes *plus at* as a new complex conjunction in Danish (on a par with *så at* and *for at*). The 'integrated expression' *plus at* heads a dependent clause without accompanying superordinate clause. In this respect, clauses starting with *plus at* differ from apparently similar clauses introduced by *og at* 'and that'. The examples in (7) show that *og at*-clauses signal a coordinated subordinate clause which presupposes a superordinate matrix clause (i.e. *jeg mener* 'I think' in (7a)). The ungrammaticality of the example in (7b) shows that *plus* cannot be used in the same way as *og*. Unlike *og at*-clauses, *plus at*-constructions do not have an identifiable matrix clause in prior discourse. This difference is due to the fact that *og* is used to connect two clauses at the sentence level, whereas *plus* operates at the discourse level by adding a supplementary comment to a prior statement (cf. example (4)).

- (7) a. *Jeg mener han skal klare sig selv, **og at** han skal ta sig sammen.* (ibid: 69)
lit. 'I think he should take care of himself, and that he should get himself together.'
- b. **Jeg mener han skal klare sig selv, **plus at** han skal tage sig sammen.*
(ibid: 69)
lit. '*I think he should take care of himself, plus that he should get himself together.'

An important observation is that *plus at*-constructions only occur in specific argumentative contexts. They always introduce and conclude the last part in a stretch of argumentation. As such, *plus at*-constructions can only be used discourse-internally. It is not possible to start a text or conversation with a *plus at*-construction as it always supplements and strengthens claims made in prior discourse.

Nørgård-Sørensen explains the syntactic isolation of *plus at*-constructions through the presence of an implicit ‘neustic component’ (cf. Hare 1970).¹¹ The neustic ‘I say so’ component is “that part of the sentence which expresses the speaker’s commitment to the factuality, desirability, etc., of the content conveyed by the phrastic [= propositional content KB]” (Lyons 1977: 749 – 50). It represents the speaker’s ‘sign of subscription’ to the speech act which for standard declarative clauses can be paraphrased as: “I hereby say that... (proposition).”

Nørgård-Sørensen argues that *plus at*-constructions are subordinate to an implicit neustic component, which in turn constitutes the underlying matrix for the entire construction (ibid: 74 –6). In the context of his analysis, the neustic component is reflected in the sentence structure of an utterance (i.e. declarative, interrogative, etc.). For *plus at* it can be paraphrased as “and as a completion of this stretch of argumentation I hereby say that (proposition)” (ibid: 74). A schematic representation of his structural analysis is rendered in (8).

- (8) stretch of argumentation [implicit neustic ‘I say so’ component [*plus at* ... (proposition)]]

He also mentions an alternative analysis for *plus at*-constructions. Another option would be to consider *plus* a preposition which can take an *at*-clause (similar to expressions like (*i forbindelse*) *med at* ‘in connection with that’, (*bortset fra at* ‘apart from that’, (*på grund*) *af at* ‘on the base of that’, (*i modsætning*) *til at* ‘as opposed to that’, etc.. Yet, Nørgård-Sørensen discards this analysis because these prepositional expressions do not necessarily share the prosodic properties (caesura and emphasis) characteristic of *plus at*-constructions (ibid: 83).

11. Hare (1970) distinguishes three components in the logical structure of utterances: the phrastic component (propositional content), the tropic component (speech-act) and the neustic component (the speaker’s commitment to the phrastic).

2.2 Så att, för att and men att-clauses

Lindström & Londen (2008) examined the grammatical and discursive aspects of the Swedish complex connectives: adversative *men att* ‘but (that)’, causal *för att* ‘for (that)’, ‘because’, consecutive *så att* ‘so (that)’ in spoken language. They distinguish these ‘sentence connectors’ (which they regard as common lexicalized complex forms), from other semi-lexicalized combinations with prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions (e.g. *därför att* ‘because’, *oavsett att* ‘irrespective of that’, *uten att* ‘without that’, etc. (ibid: 109)).

The complex connectives are composed of two general conjunctions *för* ‘for’, *så* ‘so’, *men* ‘but’ + the default subordinator *att*, the combination of which forms a multi-word conjunction. Lindström & Londen do not analyze *att* in the traditional sense of a default subordinate marker introducing declarative or nominal clauses. Instead, they focus on the discourse function of *att*.

At the discourse level, the function of *att* is “to point back to a preceding discourse source and respond to this and expand from this” (ibid: 145). As such, the complex connectives can be conceived of as a “trade-off between semantic specification and sequential back-linking”. That is, the first part of these complex forms specifies the semantic relation (e.g. adversative, causal or consecutive), whereas *att* points back to a previous discourse sequence.

Lindström & Londen observe that the connectives *så att*, *för att* and *men att* “introduce a clause which is not syntactically or semantically subordinated to an assertion made in some previous clause; rather, they introduce an additional orientation to a prior assertion” (ibid: 108). This means that the ‘independent’ syntactic units introduced by these connectives can be interpreted as subsequent units to a previous part of discourse.

Since connectives in general are an integral part of expressing speaker reasoning (i.e. “putting forward arguments, expanding them, giving motivations for them, returning to them and summarizing them” (ibid: 147)), these constructions stand in a responsive relation to prior discourse. This reflects a pragmatic kind of dependency in which these continuations or commentaries are dependent on a ‘discoursal antecedent’.

An interesting and useful concept in their analysis is the distinction between predication and discourse subordination (ibid). Predication subordination is a hierarchical, grammatical dependency which is typical for syntactically dependent clauses, and is predominantly used in written language (e.g. *Jag tror att han kommer* ‘I think that he comes’). Discourse subordination, on the other hand, comprises the sequential nature of conversational language. It concerns

a sequential dependency which is representative of (syntactically independent) clauses that function as continuations or additional commentaries to a statement which could have represented a complete and independent move in a sequential context (cf. the *plus at*-clause in example (4)).

3 Corpus investigation – method and sources

The empirical part of this study involved a bottom-up analysis of semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions on the basis of data from corpora of spoken and written language. The *Norsk talespråkskorpus - Oslodelen*¹² (henceforth NoTa-Oslo, ca. 900.000 words; The Text Laboratory) was consulted for the spoken data, and the *Leksikografisk bokmålskorpus*¹³ (henceforth LBK, ca. 100 million words; Knudsen & Vatvedt Fjeld 2013) was checked for the written data.

The corpora were searched for by means of the queries ‘part of speech’ + *at*’ whereby the different parts of speech include V, N, ADV, ADJ, INT, CONJ. The query did not differentiate between upper and lower case for the first letter of the initial element. In this way, the search procedure was able to capture initial constituents with further modifications (e.g. *veldig godt* ‘very good’, *ikke så rart* ‘not so strange’, etc.) and initial elements which are separated by a comma or semicolon (e.g. *Vi vant på god organisering, pluss at vi har fem gode spillere med 1. divisjonserfaring fra Sandviken*, LBK). Lit. ‘We won because of good organization, plus that we have five good player with experience in the 1st division from Sandviken.’), in addition to single initial minimal matrices like *Flott* ‘Great’ or *Kanskje* ‘Maybe’ (cf. example (1)).

The search interface generated a file of collocations which then had to be checked manually in order to see if the returned hits indeed contained instances of semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses. The results of these follow-up searches offer an inventory of possible initial elements in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian. A comparative analysis of the found forms will reveal if, and in what respects, the possible initial constituents differ from one another.

4 Results of the corpus investigation

Semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions as such are an infrequent phenomenon, but there is nonetheless a wide variety of possible initial elements in this con-

12. <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/oslo/index.html>

13. <http://www.hf.uio.no/iln/tjenester/kunnskap/sprak/korpus/skriftsprakskorpus/lbk/index.html>

struction type. As expected on the basis of the working definition in (3), elements conveying the speaker's attitudinal (including epistemic) assessment of the *at*-clause were frequently found. For these evaluative elements there are two subtypes: i) attitudinal elements expressing strong feelings, emotions and speaker stance, and ii) elements conveying epistemic assessments.

In addition to initial evaluative elements, there is a large group of discursive elements that may head semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses. These rhetoric items reflect the speaker's reasoning towards the *at*-clause in relation to previous discourse. Discursive initial elements signal various linking relations between prior context and the content of the *at*-clause (e.g. addition, contrast, concession, condition etc.) from the speaker's point of view. Some initial discursive elements may display multiple functions.

As implied by the working definition in (3), there were no instances of subordinate *at*-clauses headed by purely descriptive, i.e. non-attitudinal, elements (e.g. quality adjectives such as *stor* 'big', *grønn* 'green' or manner adverbs like *raskt* 'quickly', *vakkert* 'beautifully'). The NoTa-Oslo and LBK contain the same basic inventory of possible initial elements, but there is much more variation for both evaluative and discursive elements in the LBK. Appendix A presents an overview of the range of possible initial constituents in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian.

4.1 Evaluative semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions

The majority of the initial evaluative elements are adjectives expressing positive stance (e.g. *bra* 'good', *fint* 'nice', *fantastisk* 'fantastic', *kult* 'cool', etc.), negative stance (e.g. *forferdelig* 'awful', *tragisk* 'tragic', *ubehagelig* 'unpleasant', *grusomt* 'hideous', etc.) and various other speaker-oriented evaluations (e.g. *interessant* 'interesting', *usannsynlig* 'improbable', *merkelig* 'strange', *urettferdig* 'unreasonable', etc.) towards the content of the *at*-clause.

In example (9), *bra* 'good' is used to express the speaker's delightment about the fact the therapy was successful.

- (9) *Men jeg valgte ham. Merkelig. Ja.*
 lit. 'But I chose him. Strange. Yes.'
Bra at terapien var en suksess! (LBK)
 'Good that the therapy was a success!'

In (10) speaker 1 evaluates that it is an incredibly good thing that speaker 2 is not just walking around being somehow angry.

- (10) 1: *det sier jo litt da at du er bare glad liksom det er jo* +[pron=uklart] *kjempebra*
lit. 'That does say something. That you are just glad somehow. That is just great.'
- 2: {*uforståelig*}
{unintelligable}
[...]
- 1: *det gjør jeg jo # dødsbra at du ikke bare går rundt og er sur liksom*
'Well that is what I do # damn good that you do not just walk around and be somehow angry.'
- 2: * [*latter*]
[laughing]' (NoTa-Oslo)

Verbal forms occur in present participle form and may be used as either adjectives or adverbs (e.g. *irriterende* 'annoying', *garantert* 'guaranteed', *forvirrende* 'confusing', *imponerende* 'impressive', etc.)¹⁴ In (11), the speaker makes an additional explanatory comment with respect to the previous statement in which s/he evaluates that it must be confusing for the child that the moon can be both full and half.

- (11) Barnet hadde først ikke klart for seg hvilke trekk som var bestemmende for hva som var måne.
'At first the child did not have a clear idea about which features were decisive for what counts as moon.'
- Forvirrende** at en måne både kan være hel og halv. (LBK)
'Confusing that a moon can be both full and half.'

Initial evaluative adverbs are all epistemic (*kanskje* 'perhaps', *kan hende* 'maybe', *muligens* 'possibly', *sannsynligvis* 'probably'), except for *heldigvis* (and *gudskjelov* if it is considered an adverb instead of an interjection). In (12), the speaker adds an epistemically assessed comment to his/her previous statement by saying that it may take a couple of years before there will be top title games available.

14. Unlike Julien, I do not consider verbal forms like Swedish *hoppas* 'hope-1SG' minimal matrices as these only involve deletion of the subject. Likewise, Julien does not conceive of imperative forms (e.g. *Säg att det inte är sant!* 'Say that it is not true!') as minimal matrix clauses because "there is nothing exceptional about these constructions" (Julien 2009: 133).

- (12) *Selv om teknologien er spennende, så er ikke innholdet på plass.*
 lit. 'Although the technology is exciting, the content is not in place.'
Kan hende at vi må vente et par år før det kommer topp titler på spill.
 'Maybe that we have to wait a couple of years before there will be top
 title games.'
Hva med å se filmer på 3D-TV? (LBK)
 'What about watching movies on 3D TV?'

In (13) the *kanskje at*-clause is an epistemic assessment of the possibility that there might be a lot of crime going on in the neighborhood. At the same time, the *kanskje at*-clause functions as a tentative answer to the interviewer's question if there is actually something negative about the place where the interviewee lives.

- (13) *er det noen ting som ikke er så positivt?*
 lit. 'Are there things that are not so positive?'
ja kanskje det kanskje at det er e # mye kriminell vi- +[pron=uklart] e
kriminalitet da
 'Yes that may be perhaps that there is e a lot criminal we- e crime.'
i gåsetegn +[pron=uklart] # jeg vet ikke jeg (NoTa-Oslo)
 'By the way, I don't know.'

Initial sentence adverbs differ from the adjectival, nominal and verbal one-word matrix clauses (cf. Julien 2009) in that they, like *pluss* and *men*, do not seem to have a full clause structure. Ramat & Ricca (1998: 212-14) mention this 'puzzling syntactic feature' of some sentence adverbs which "go against their nature: they occur together with a complementizer and play a main predication role." They explain this unusual phenomenon by taking into account the diachrony of adverbs that originated through univerbation of a higher predicate (like French *peut-être* 'maybe').

This scenario may also apply to the univerbated adverbs *kanskje*, *kan hende* and *gudskjelov* (cf. Lindqvist 1961; Wessén 1968). In that case, the adverbial semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses reflect an earlier stage in the development from verb phrase (e.g. *(det) kan skje (at)* '(it) can happen (that)') to univerbated sentence adverb (e.g. *kanskje*). On this view, this particular subset of sentence adverbs can also be considered minimal matrices because of their origin in a predicate.

The attested non-univerbated adverbs (*sannsynligvis*, *muligens*, *heldigvis*, etc.) are all near-synonyms of the univerbated ones. Other common sentence adverbs such as *dessverre* ‘unfortunately’, *faktisk* ‘actually’, *forhåpentligvis* ‘hopefully’ do not seem to occur as initial element. The tendency for epistemic adverbs to occur in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions could therefore be a case of analogical extension after the pattern of *kanskje* and *kan hende*.

There are only two instances of nominal initial elements. One conveying positive stance (*flaks* ‘luck’), the other expressing negative stance (*synd* ‘a pity’). In (14), *flaks* denotes that the speaker thinks it is lucky that no one got hurt when the lamp and ceiling tile fell down.

- (14) *En lampe raser plutselig ned fra taket. Like etter kommer en hel takplate.*
lit. ‘A lamp suddenly falls down from the ceiling. Just after comes a whole ceiling tile.’

Flaks at ingen får den i hodet. (LBK)

‘Luck that no one gets it in the head.’

Interjections, social formula and curses (*gudskjelov* ‘thank god’, *faen* ‘damn it’, *pokker* ‘damn’, *ikke sant* ‘right?’, *takk* ‘thanks’, *unnskyld* ‘pardon’, *sorry* ‘sorry’, etc.) may also head a semi-insubordinate *at*-construction. These initial constituents express (strong) feelings, emotions, polite requests, etc. on behalf of the speaker. In (15) the speaker excuses him-/herself in advance for disturbing Carl.

- (15) Hei, Carl. ***Unnskyld at jeg forstyrrer. Har du tid et øyeblikk?*** (LBK)
lit. ‘Hi, Carl. I am sorry to interrupt. Do you have a minute?’

To sum up, there are basically two types of evaluative initial elements: attitudinal (expressing various emotions and speaker stance) and epistemic ones (conveying degrees of uncertainty). The speaker’s attitudinal assessment of the *at*-clause may take the form of an exclamation (cf. example (9)), but it is generally an evaluative declarative clause (though in written language data it may be ambiguous between these two in absence of an exclamation mark, cf. example (14)). Epistemic evaluations never occur with exclamative illocutionary force. All initial evaluative elements can be considered minimal matrices (cf. Julien 2009), or minimal clauses in case of interjections, curses or social formula.

4.2 Discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions

Initial discursive elements convey the speaker's reasoning towards the content of the *at*-clause in relation to prior statements. The three main linking functions are: i) adding a continuation or supplementary comment to a prior statement, ii) expanding on prior discourse by means of examples or comparisons, and iii) returning to prior discourse by highlighting a contrast, condition or limitation with respect to the content of the *at*-clause.

Initial discursive elements used to introduce a continuation or additional comment to a previous statement include items like *pluss* 'plus', *dessuten* 'moreover', *samt* 'and', *også* 'also', *utover* 'in addition to', etc. In (16), *dessuten* introduces an *at*-clause that supplements and reinforces the speaker's previous statement about alcohol and car driving by emphasizing that advertising for alcohol is not even permitted in Norway.

- (16) *Jeg trodde at alkohol og bilkjøring ikke hører sammen.*
 lit. 'I thought that alcohol and driving a car do not go together.'
Dessuten at *alkoholreklame ikke er tillatt i Norge.* (LBK)
 'Moreover that advertising for alcohol is not permitted in Norway.'

Some initial discursive elements serve to expand on prior discourse (e.g. *for eksempel* (+ variants of the abbreviation *f.eks.*, 'e.g.') 'for example', *blant annet* 'among others', *det vil si* (+ variants of the abbreviation *dvs.* 'that is'), *altså* 'thus/hence', *enten-eller* 'either - or', *nemlig* 'namely') by giving a further clarification of (one specific part of) the previous statement. In (17), *for eksempel* refers to one of 'the certain things he got to know about her in the meantime'.

- (17) *I mellomtiden hadde han fått vite visse ting om henne.*
 lit. 'In the meantime he got to know certain things about her.'
For eksempel at *hun hadde en sønn.* (LBK)
 'For example that she had a son.'

Other discursive items may specify a contrast, condition or limitation by returning to a certain aspect of prior discourse (e.g. *særlig* 'especially', *bortsett fra* 'apart from that', *forutsatt* 'provided that', *bare* 'just / only', *ikke* 'not', etc.). In general, these elements oppose or limit the *at*-clause in relation to previous statements.

In (18) speaker 1 and 2 are discussing highest mountain peaks in Norway. Speaker 1 is confusing the mountains *Glittertind* and *Snøhetta*. According to him/her these two mountains are more or less the same, apart from the fact that *Snøhetta* comes in either twenty-fourth or twenty-third place in the ranking of highest mountains in Norway (whereas *Glittertind* is the second-highest mountain in Norway KB).

- (18) 1: *S- nei Glitretind jeg blander jeg*
lit. 'S-no Glitretind I am mixing up.'
- 2: *ja +[pron=uklart]*
'Yes.'
- 1: *Glitretind Snøhetta det er jo nesten det samme*
'Glitretind Snøhetta that is almost the same.'
- 2: *Snøhetta er {uforståelig} ...*
'Snøhetta is {unintelligible}...'
- 1: *bortsett fra at Snøhetta ligger på tjuelfjerde plass eller tjuetredje plass?*
'Apart from that Snøhetta is in twenty-fourth place or twenty-third place?'
- 2: * *ja [latter]* (NoTa-Oslo)
'Yes [laughing].'

In (19) the *bare at*-clause adds a further specification to the previous statement by limiting the comparison between *Nordstrand* and *Manglerud*. The *bare at*-clause singles out one particular aspect which is actually different for the districts *Nordstrand* and *Manglerud*: the type of people who go there.

- (19) *Nordstrand trur jeg faktisk er samme sånn som Manglerud*
lit. 'I think Nordstrand is actually the same as Manglerud.'
- bare at det er andre type mennesker som går der* (NoTa-Oslo)
'Just that it is another kind of people who go there.'

The discursive element *bare* may also occur in exclamative contexts. In (20) the *bare at*-clause complements and reinforces the speaker's enthusiasm about the fact that s/he had seen the CBS weatherman: it was him, but without his hairpiece.

- (20) *Det var mannen fra værmeldinga på CBS!*
lit. 'That was the man from the weather forecast on CBS!'
Bare at han ikke hadde på seg tupeen!
'Only that he was not wearing his toupet!'
Det var forkleddningen hans. (LBK)
'That was his disguise.'

As initial element, *men* 'but' is used with different meanings and functions. This reflects its overall status as a multifunctional element expressing contrast, objection or limitation (cf. Bokmålsordboka). In (21) the speaker states that there may not be living lynxes (at the biology department KB). The *men at*-clause is a continuation of the prior statement by which s/he stresses that they do have some living animals there.

- (21) *nei kanskje ikke levende gauper **men at** de har noe levende der da*
 (NoTa-Oslo)
lit. 'No perhaps not living lynxes but that they do have some living [animals] there.'

However, *men* may also be used to express astonishment, exhortation or impatience (cf. Bokmålsordboka). In (22) it is used in an exclamative expression to convey the speaker's surprise that a woman looks way too old for her age.

- (22) *Riktignok er hun fire år eldre enn han, altså 47, snart 50, med andre ord.*
lit. 'Admittedly, she is four yours older than him, thus 47, almost 50, in other words.'
Men at hun skulle se så gammel ut!
'But that she would look so old!'
Kanskje er det brillene. Og så den frisyren!
'Perhaps is the glasses. And then the hair!'

The example in (22) differs from the exclamative clauses in (9) and (20) in that *men* is not used to express the speaker's reasoning or evaluation with respect to *at*-clause; rather it generates a 'surprise effect' (cf. Delsing 2010: 17; footnote 8). It resembles the insubordinate *at*-clause in example (2a), though it is pragmatically dependent on the prior statement.

To sum up, discursive initial elements are part of a diverse group of items (adverbs, multi-word conjunctions and semi-lexicalized combinations) which are used for rhetoric purposes and the marking of various discourse relations. On functional grounds they can be grouped under the broad rubric of discourse connectives. An essential criterion for initial discursive elements in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions is that they establish a link between the *at*-clause and the prior context from the speaker's point of view, instead of connecting two clauses at the sentence level.

5 Concluding discussion

There are basically two types of initial elements in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions: evaluative minimal matrices and discourse connectives. The working definition in (3) explicitly states that the initial element conveys the speaker's attitudinal (including epistemic) assessment of the propositional content expressed in the *at*-clause. Yet, it does not mention rhetoric elements as possible initial constituents, though discursive meanings are part of the interpersonal meanings expressed by the initial element (cf. Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 228).

There are a number of semantic and structural differences between evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions. The main semantic difference is that evaluative initial elements express various speaker-oriented evaluations and attitudes towards the content of the *at*-clause, whereas discursive initial elements convey the speaker's reasoning with respect to the *at*-clause in relation to (some aspect of) prior discourse.

On a structural level, initial evaluative elements can be considered minimal matrices (cf. Julien 2009). These comprise adjectives (e.g. *bra* 'good'), nouns (e.g. *flaks* 'luck') and present participle verbal forms (e.g. *forvirrende* 'confusing'). In addition, epistemic sentence adverbs (e.g. *kanskje* 'maybe') as well as various types of interjections (e.g. *gudskjelov* 'thank god') and social formula (e.g. *unnskyld* 'pardon') may introduce a semi-insubordinate *at*-construction. Discursive initial elements include (conjunctive) adverbs (e.g. *dessuten* 'moreover'), complex conjunctions (e.g. *så at* 'so that') and semi-lexicalized combinations (e.g. *bortsett fra at* 'apart from that'). These fall under the broad rubric of discourse connectives.

Despite these semantic and structural differences, evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions also have a lot in common. They express

either an evaluation or a line of thought (or a combination of both) from the speaker's point of view (cf. Nørgård-Sørensen's analysis of *plus at*-constructions in terms of an 'implicit neustic 'I say so' component'). Both construction types occur predominantly as declarative clauses, but they may also occur with exclamative intonation in order to stress the speaker's emotional involvement.

Functionally, it can be observed that both construction types relate back to prior discourse, though there are different levels of pragmatic dependence for individual instances of semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions. Discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions always occur discourse-internally as they establish a rhetoric link between the *at*-clause and a specific part of a prior statement (e.g. *for eksempel*) or a stretch of discourse (e.g. *pluss*). In this regard there is a parallel between evaluative and discursive initial elements. Evaluative semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions also occur discourse-internally and point back to prior discourse: they represent attitudinal or epistemic continuations and additional comments.

This pragmatic dependence on previous statements suggests that both evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions are 'elaborative' constructions (cf. D'Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014). This is also strengthened by the fact that the examples with exclamative intonation in (9) and (20) are of a different kind than the exclamative insubordinate *at*-construction in (2a).

Both evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *at*-clauses are problematic for traditional syntactic analysis. These constructions bear the formal hallmarks of subordinate clauses (i.e. the subordinate marker *at*, and (overt) subordinate word order in presence of a negation marker or sentence adverb in between the subject and finite verb), but they function as main clauses. Pragmatically, their status is far from independent because these syntactically independent units are heavily dependent on prior context (cf. Lindstrom & Londen's 'discoursal antecedent'). When analyzing these constructions at the sentence level, assuming a hierarchical dependency between the initial element and the *at*-clause, they do not fit Diderichsen's (1946) classical A and B schemes for the analysis of main and subordinate clauses in the Mainland Scandinavian languages.

A functional analysis in terms of discourse subordination (cf. Lindstrom & Londen 2008) offers an accurate description of the structural status of semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions. These constructions function as continuations or additional comments to a prior assertion. As such, they always occur discourse-internally. On pragmatic grounds these syntactic independent unit can-

not stand on their own as they stand in a responsive relation to prior independent statements. This represents a sequential dependency at the discourse level, rather than a hierarchical relation between the initial element and the *at*-clause at the sentence level. In these constructions *at* operates at the discourse level “to point back to preceding discourse source and respond and expand from this” (Lindstrom & Londen 2008: 145).

To conclude, the examination of semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions extends beyond the sentence level. Despite their syntactic independent status, they are heavily dependent on prior context. Because they predominantly function as evaluative or discursive continuations or comments to previous statements, they are best analyzed as a discourse level phenomenon.

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Karin Beijering
Postdoctoral Fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO)
Department of Linguistics
University of Antwerp – CST
Prinsstraat 13 S.R. 214
B-2000 Antwerp
Belgium
Karin.Beijering@uantwerpen.be

Appendix A

Initial constituents in semi-insubordinate *at*-constructions in Norwegian

absurd	fascinerende	i påvente av	nemlig	sørgelig
aldri	feigt	i stedet for	<i>og</i>	sorry
åltreit	fint	idiotisk	også	spennende
altså	flaks	ikke	ok	spesielt
antagelig	flott	imponerende	overraskende	spøkefullt
antakelig	for	interessant	<i>på grunn</i>	sykt
åpenbart	forbausende	ironisk	på tide	synd
artig	forbløffende	irriterende	pinlig	takk
både - og	fordi	kanskje	pluss	<i>tilfeldig</i>
bare	forferdelig	kan hende	pokker	toft
beklagelig	formodentlig	kjekt	positivt	tragisk
besynderlig	først	kjempefint	provoserende	trist
blant annet bl.a.	først og fremst	kjempeflott	pussig	typisk
bortsett fra	forunderlig	kjempegøy	rart	ubegripelig
bra <i>dødsbra</i>	foruten	kjipt	så	ubehagelig
d.v.s. dvs. dvs.	forutsatt	klart	særlig	ufattelig
dårlig	forvirrende	klokt	<i>siden</i>	uforståelig
deilig	fryktelig	knapt	<i>sikkert</i>	umulig (ikke)
deretter	galt (for)	koselig	samt	underlig
dernest	garantert	kult	sånn	unnskyld
dessuten	godt	leit	sannsynligvis	urettferdig
dumt	gøy	likeledes	sant (ikke)	urimelig
ekzelt	greit	<i>liksom</i>	såpass	urovekkende
eksempel (for)	greitt	hurt	selvfølgelig	usannsynlig
eksempelvis	grusomt	men	sjelden	uten
enten - eller	gud skje lov	merkelig	<i>sjeldent</i>	utmerket
ergerlig	gudskjelov	merkverdig	sjokkerende	utover
eventuelt	heldig	moro	skjønt	utrolig
f eks f. eks. f.eks. f.eks. for eksempel foreksempel for eksempel	heldigvis		skremmende	uvanlig
fælt	herlig	morsom	slik	uvirkelig
faen	herregud	mulig	snodig	visst
fantastisk	hyggelig	muligens	søren	vondt

regular = only in LBK

bold = both in LBK and NoTa-Oslo*italic* = only in NoTa-Oslo

shaded cells = evaluative elements

transparent cells = discursive elements