

# “No big girl” – an exceptional NPI in Norwegian<sup>\*</sup>

## Abstract

In Norwegian, a weak quantifier or a scalar adjective representing the upper end of the scale may combine with a noun with a definite suffix and thereby form an attenuating NPI. These phrases are exceptional as nominal phrases, since they do not accept a prenominal definiteness marker despite their overall definiteness, and they are exceptional as attenuating NPIs, since they are templatic instead of being lexically defined.

The reason why the nominal phrases under discussion do not accept prenominal definiteness markers is arguably that there is no D head. The absence of a D head makes the phrases defective in their ability to refer. They still work fine as NPIs, since as NPIs they should not be truly referential anyway.

Concerning their licensing properties, when the NPIs discussed here are confronted with three influential theories of NPI-licensing (Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997) and Giannakidou (1998)) it appears that neither of these theories can account for them. Hence, a more adequate theoretical approach to NPIs is called for.

## 1. Introduction

In Norwegian, there is a construction where a nominal phrase consisting of a weak quantifier or an adjective plus a noun with a suffixed definite article but without a prenominal determiner appears in negative contexts. Some examples of this rather peculiar construction are shown in (1).

- (1)a.   Ho   var   ikkje stor-e   jent-a.  
         she   was   not   big-DEF girl-DEF  
         ‘She was no big girl.’

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- b. Vi gikk ikkje lang-e tur-en.  
 we walked not long-DEF trip-DEF  
 ‘We did not walk a long distance.’
- c. Dei sa ikkje mange<sup>1</sup> ord-a.  
 they said not many word-DEF.PL  
 ‘They did not say many words.’
- d. Ein rapport er venta om ikkje mange dag-ane.  
 a report is expected in not many day-DEF.PL  
 ‘A report is expected in not many days.’

As we see, these nominal phrases can be predicates, arguments, or parts of adverbials. In any case, the quantifier or adjective is obligatory, and moreover, only scalar adjectives are allowed.

In addition, the quantifier or adjective must represent the upper end of the scale. To take the construction in (1b) as an example, it becomes ungrammatical if the adjective *lang* ‘long’ is replaced by *kort* ‘short’, as in (2a). Instead, the intended meaning of (2a) must be expressed by means of an ordinary indefinite nominal phrase following the negation, as in (2b), or by replacing the negation and the nominal phrase with a nominal phrase introduced by a negative quantifier, as in (2c).

- (2)a. \* Vi gikk ikkje korte turen.  
 we walked not short.DEF trip.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘We did not walk a short distance.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje noen kort tur.  
 we walked not any short trip  
 ‘We did not walk a short distance.’

<sup>1</sup> There is no morphological distinction between indefinite and definite in the quantifier *mange* ‘many’.

- c. Vi gikk ingen kort tur.  
 we walked no short trip  
 ‘We walked no short distance.’

It is also clear that nominal phrases of the type exemplified in (1) are negative polarity items (NPIs). If the negation is left out, the clause becomes ungrammatical, as shown in (3).

- (3)a. \* Ho var store jenta.  
 she was big.DEF girl.DEF
- b. \* Vi gikk lange turen.  
 we walked long.DEF trip.DEF
- c. \* Dei sa mange orda.  
 they said many word.DEF.PL
- d. \* Ein rapport er venta om mange dagane.  
 a report is expected in many day.DEF.PL

Norwegian NPIs of the type shown in (1) have however not been much recognised in the linguistic literature. Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo (1997:302) give three examples where a phrase of this type has predicative function, and suggest that the construction is restricted to predicative nominals in negated clauses, which is obviously not the case. To my knowledge, the only work where the construction is discussed in some detail is Johannessen (1997), a paper which still remains unpublished.

Since it has attracted very little attention in the literature, the construction has no established name. For lack of a better term I will call it the “store jenta”-construction. And as we will see below, the construction has very interesting properties and deserves to be taken seriously. Firstly, there is the templatic nature of nominal phrases of the “store jenta”-type. From the literature on NPIs one gets the impression that NPIs are normally built around certain lexical items. Nevertheless, no particular lexical item is

required to make an expression an instance of the “store jenta”-construction. Instead, it is the form of the nominal phrase as a whole that matters. Hence, it seems that these NPIs are exceptional in this respect.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, there is the surprising semantic property that the nominal phrase does not get a definite reading despite the presence of the suffixed definite article, which raises the question of how the semantics of these nominal phrases should be accounted for.

In the following treatment of the “store jenta”-construction I will first, in section 2, give some more examples in order to establish that it really is templatic of nature. In section 3 I take a closer look at its semantic properties, and conclude that it is an attenuating NPI of high scalar value, according to the classification system proposed by Israel (1996, 2001, 2004). In addition, it is conventionally associated with understatement.

Then in section 4 I deal with the internal syntax of the “store jenta”-construction, which includes the definiteness problem. I conclude that despite the obligatory definiteness marking on the head noun, “store jenta”-constructions are nominal phrases that lack a D head. The suffixed definiteness marker represents a head lower down in the syntactic structure, which cannot make the phrase referential in the absence of D. As we will see, this may be the reason why the phrases are NPIs.

The external syntax of the “store jenta”-construction is investigated in sections 5 and 6. In section 5 I look at which positions in the clause a “store jenta”-construction can appear in. One conclusion is that in its base position it has to be c-commanded by its licensor; another is that few “store jenta”-constructions are acceptable as subjects. The topic of section 6 is the range of contexts that can license “store jenta”-constructions. It turns out that there are certain restrictions on the licensing of the “store jenta”-construction, and that these can at least to some extent be explained as a consequence of the construction’s exceptional internal syntax.

<sup>2</sup> Janne Bondi Johannessen (p.c.) suggests that minimising NPIs can be formed productively. If so, the “store jenta” expressions are not so exceptional among NPIs in general, only among maximising NPIs. On the other hand, Giannakidou (1998:37) states that “minimizers generally have the hallmark of idioms”, which I take to mean that minimisers are normally lexicalised. Whether or not this is true will have to be established through empirical investigations in various languages.

## 2. A templatic NPI

As I have already mentioned, one property that makes the “store jenta”-construction unusual as an NPI is that it is not associated with any particular lexical item. Many different combinations of adjective or quantifier and noun are possible, as long as the adjective or quantifier denotes a high scalar value. The following selection of authentic examples, taken from *The Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts*, will serve to illustrate this fact:<sup>3</sup>

- (4)a. Det vara ikkje lange stunda så kom tante Gerd.  
it lasted not long.DEF while.DEF then came aunt Gerd  
‘It did not take long before auntie Gerd arrived.’
- b. Ho fekk ikkje store trøysta.  
she got not big.DEF comfort.DEF  
‘She didn’t get much comfort.’
- c. Det er ikkje lange avstanden mellom jernbanestasjonen og  
it is not long.DEF distance.DEF between railway.station.DEF and  
bussterminalen.  
bus.terminal.DEF  
‘There is not a long distance between the railway station and the bus terminal.’
- d. Det er ikke mange hjemmekampene han har gått glipp av  
it is not many home.games.DEF he has missed  
de siste 25 årene.  
the last 25 years  
‘He has not missed many home games for the last 25 years.’

<sup>3</sup> The examples (4a)-(4c) are written in Nynorsk, whereas the examples in (4d)-(4f) are written in Bokmål. This is however just a matter of orthography and of no significance here.

- e. Jeg har egentlig ikke store ambisjonene.  
 I have really not big.DEF/PL ambitions.DEF  
 ‘I don’t really have big ambitions.’
- f. Han var ikke gamle karen før han løftet hodet.  
 he was not old.DEF chap.DEF before he lifted head.DEF  
 ‘He was not an old chap when he held his head up.’

We see that there is variation with respect to the adjective/quantifier and with respect to the noun. Hence, it is the construction as a whole that is the NPI. And the construction is productive – it may be formed on new combinations of lexical items. In (5) I show some perfectly acceptable examples that I made up:

- (5)a. Dei har ikkje høge fjella i Danmark.  
 they have not high mountains.DEF in Denmark  
 ‘They don’t have very high mountains in Denmark.’
- b. Ho skriv ikkje tjukke bøkene.  
 she writes not thick books.DEF  
 ‘She does not write thick books.’
- c. Han har ikkje store formuen.  
 he has not big fortune.DEF  
 ‘He has no big fortune.’

The examples in (6), on the other hand, are not well formed. This fact indicates that there is a further restriction on the adjectives that appear in the “store jenta”-construction: they must refer to the upper end of a scale without specification or qualification.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Janne Bondi Johannessen for providing the examples in (6) and in (8ab).

(6)a. \* Ho var ikkje kjempe-store jenta.  
 she was not giant-big.DEF girl  
 Intended meaning: ‘She was no enormously big girl.’

b. \* Ho skreiv ikkje meter-tjukke bøkene.  
 she wrote not meter-thick.DEF/PL books.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘She did not write yard-thick books.’

The exception is modifiers like *særlig* and *spesielt*, both meaning ‘especially’. These modifiers may well appear in the “store jenta”-construction:

(7)a. Ho var ikkje særlig store jenta.  
 she was not especially big.DEF girl.DEF  
 ‘She was no especially big girl.’

b. Vi gikk ikkje spesielt lange turen.  
 we walked not especially long.DEF trip.DEF  
 ‘We did not walk an especially long distance.’

The examples in (8ab) are however also out. Hence, it seems that adjectives that denote a dimension in space or time (see (4a)) are more acceptable in the “store jenta”-construction than those that do not.<sup>5</sup> This conclusion is further supported by (8c), which

<sup>5</sup> There is a notable exception to this generalisation. The adjective *rar*, which ultimately comes from Latin *rarus*, can appear in “store jenta”-constructions, as exemplified in (i) and (ii):

(i) Ho fekk ikkje rare honoraret.  
 she got not *rar*.DEF payment.DEF  
 ‘She didn’t get much of a payment.’

(ii) Det var ikkje rare greiene.  
 it was not *rar*.DEF things.DEF  
 ‘It wasn’t much to speak about.’

Outside of “store jenta”-constructions, Norwegian *rar* means ‘odd, strange’. Its meaning in “store jenta”-constructions seems to be closer to ‘highly valued’ or ‘very fine’, which are possible meanings of English *rare* and also have been within the semantic range of Scandinavian *rar*

at least to my ear is much worse than (5c), even though the two mean more or less the same.

(8)a. \* Det var ikkje fine huset.  
it was not nice.DEF house.DEF  
Intended meaning: ‘It was no nice house.’

b. \* Ho var ikkje intelligente jenta.  
she was not intelligent.DEF girl.DEF  
Intended meaning: ‘She was no intelligent girl.’

c. ?\* Han er ikkje rike karen.  
he is not rich.DEF chap.DEF  
Intended meaning: ‘He is no rich chap.’

I will leave aside the search for a more precise formulation of the restriction that rules out the examples in (8). I will instead take a closer look at the meaning of the “store jenta”-construction.

### 3. The meaning of the “store jenta”-construction

My analysis of the meaning of the “store jenta”-construction will start from the classification of polarity items in Israel (1996, 2001, 2004), and in particular Israel’s 2001 paper. In the terms of Israel (2001), polarity items are either *emphatic*, serving to strengthen the force of the utterance, or *attenuating*, in which case they weaken the force of the utterance. In addition, they refer either to high scalar values or to low scalar values. And typically, an emphatic polarity item with a low scalar value is an NPI, whereas an emphatic polarity item with a high scalar value is a positive polarity item – a PPI. Conversely, attenuating polarity items with a low scalar value tend to be PPIs, while attenuating polarity items with a high scalar value are normally NPIs. For clarity,

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(see Svenska Akademiens ordbok, column R317). In any case, it is clear that *rar* in “store jenta”-constructions denotes quality rather than extension or amount.



this pattern is shown in Table 1, along with some English examples of each type of polarity item.

Scalar value	EMPHATIC	ATTENUATING
HIGH	PPIs: <i>tons, awfully, as hell</i>	NPIs: <i>much, long, all that</i>
LOW	NPIs: <i>a wink, at all, a red cent, the least bit</i>	PPIs: <i>a tad, sorta, rather, somewhat</i>

Table 1: Classification of polarity items (adapted from Israel 2001:303)

Many, perhaps most, polarity items fit into one of the four cells in Table 1, which is why Israel (2001) refers to these types collectively as *canonical* polarity items. He points out, though, that polarity items of other types also exist. For example, there are NPIs that are emphatic – they strengthen the negation – and encode a *high* scalar value, in contrast with emphatic low scalar value NPIs like *a wink*. Since the latter are often referred to as *minimisers* (with a term introduced in Bolinger 1972), emphatic high scalar value NPIs might appropriately be called *maximisers*. Two of the examples of maximisers given by Israel (2001) are shown in (9).

- (9)a. Wild horses couldn't keep me away.  
b. I wouldn't do it for all the tea in China.

If we now consider the “store jenta”-construction in the light of Israel’s classification of polarity items, it is clear that this construction always represents a high scalar value – this was stated already in the introduction to this paper. The question is then which rhetoric function does it have: is it emphatic or attenuating?

Let us first observe that a natural interpretation of the utterance in (1a), repeated here as (10), is that it not only states that she was not big, but in fact that she was quite small:

- (10) Ho var ikkje store jenta.  
she was not big.DEF girl.DEF  
‘She was no big girl [but in fact quite small].’

The same effect is seen in the authentic examples (11) and (12) (also from *The Oslo Corpus of Tagged Norwegian Texts*) – the meaning of the “store jenta”-construction as a whole is that a value at the lower end of the scale holds true. In (11), the context shows that the first clause is meant to convey that Zhirinovsky’s chances are small, and in (12), we understand that Periander said very little.

- (11) Sjirinovskij har ikkje store sjansane. Folk er lei av  
 Zhirinovsky has not big.DEF/PL chances.DEF people are tired of  
 galenskapen hans  
 madness.DEF his  
 ‘Zhirinovsky’s chances are not big. People are tired of his madness.’
- (12) Periander sa ikkje mange orda. Han tenkte berre på sitt.  
 P. said not many words.DEF he thought only on POSS.REFL  
 ‘Periander did not say many words. He was only thinking about his own business.’

It does not follow, however, that the “store jenta”-construction in itself necessarily encodes the stronger statement. Of relevance here is the discussion of *litotes* in van der Wouden (1996, 1997). Litotes is the rhetoric figure where an affirmative statement is expressed by means of the negation of the opposite, and it necessarily involves scalar concepts, since only scalar concepts allow us to draw positive inferences from a negative statement. Hence, the “store jenta”-construction exemplifies litotes. But as van der Wouden points out, there are two competing views on the semantics of litotes. According to what I will call the strongly positive interpretation, the meaning of litotes constructions is quite the opposite of their non-negated counterparts, so that the middle area between the two extreme ends of the scale is excluded. On this view, saying that someone is “not very smart” amounts to claiming that the person is in fact stupid. According to the other view, which I will call the weaker interpretation, a litotes expression also allows an interpretation where the property ascribed to the subject lies somewhere between the two extremes of the relevant scale, so that saying that someone is “not very smart” allows the interpretation that the person in question has average to low intelli-

gence. Van der Wouden himself is more sympathetic to the latter view, and suggests that in cases where a litotes construction is used to express the opposite of what is negated, to the exclusion of the middle part of the scale, this is due to *understatement*, which is an independent mechanism.

Now if the strongly positive interpretation of litotes is correct, “store jenta”-constructions are emphatic; they strengthen the negation. Since they also refer to the upper end of the scale, the only class of NPis they could belong to is the maximiser class — the emphatic high scalar value NPis. But clearly, “store jenta”-constructions are not maximisers. Maximisers typically express the unlikelihood of some event by describing a situation where the event would be maximally likely to occur and then stating that it will not occur even under those maximally favourable circumstances. This is not what the “store jenta”-construction means. Moreover, it can be shown that the “store jenta”-construction is not emphatic. Just like English *even*, discussed in Israel (1996), the Norwegian focusing particle *eingong* encodes an emphatic information value (see Lindstad 1999:16). But unlike *even*, *eingong* is itself an NPI, so that it can only be used to test the emphatic value of negated clauses. Nevertheless, since the “store jenta”-construction is also an NPI, the test we want can be constructed with *eingong*.

Note first that *eingong* may well combine with minimisers, as in (13), and with maximisers, as in (14).

- (13) Det kostar ikkje eit raudt øre eingong.  
 it costs not a red cent even  
 ‘It does not even cost a red cent.’

- (14) Ikkje eingong ti ville hestar kunne halde meg innandørs i går.  
 not even ten wild horses could keep me indoors yesterday  
 ‘Not even wild horses could keep me indoors yesterday.’

*Eingong* is also much better in (15a) than in (15b), which serves to demonstrate that just like *even*, it is better with relatively remarkable claims than with relatively trivial claims – see the discussion of *even* in Israel (1996:638). In other words, *eingong* requires an emphatic information value.

(15)a. Harry gikk ikkje den kortaste løypa eingong.  
 H. walked not the shortest track even  
 ‘Harry did not walk even the shortest track.’

b. # Harry gikk ikkje den lengste løypa eingong.  
 H. walked not the longest track even  
 ‘Harry did not walk even the longest track.’

But strikingly, combined with a “store jenta”-construction *eingong* is not just less acceptable; it is completely impossible:

(16)a. \* Ho var ikkje store jenta eingong.  
 she was not big girl.DEF even

b. \* Vi gikk ikkje lange turen eingong.  
 we walked not long trip.DEF even

This is an indication that the “store jenta”-construction is not emphatic. It is not a maximiser but instead an attenuating NPI — recall that NPIs encoding the upper end of a scale are either maximisers or attenuating NPI. The fact that a “store jenta”-construction can be followed up by a stronger claim, as shown in (17), points in the same direction:

(17) Ho var ikkje store jenta, faktisk var ho berre to år.  
 she was not big girl.DEF in.fact was she only two years  
 ‘She was no big girl, in fact she was only two years old.’

It is typical for attenuating NPIs that they can be followed up by a stronger statement, while emphatic NPIs do not allow this (see Israel 1996:633).

We must conclude that the “store jenta”-construction is an attenuating NPI with high scalar value, which means that it belongs to the same class as *much*. This might seem a bit surprising, since the attenuating NPIs mentioned in Israel (1996, 2001) are

degree expressions, and not whole nominal phrases. On the other hand, we can now understand why modifiers like *særlig* ‘especially’ and *spesielt* ‘especially’, both shown in (7), are compatible with “store jenta”-constructions. These modifiers are also attenuating NPIs with high scalar value, and consequently, they do not alter the overall semantics of the “store jenta”-construction.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion in this section is that van der Wouden is right about litotes: it does not necessarily exclude the middle value. As the weaker interpretation of litotes predicts, “store jenta”-constructions do not logically entail that the lower end of the scale holds true. Nevertheless, native speakers tend to have the intuition that the “store jenta”-construction involves exactly this scalar implicature. This intuition suggests that although the literal meaning of the “store jenta”-construction is simply a denial that a quantifier or a scalar adjective representing the upper end of a scale holds true, the pragmatic use of the construction habitually involves understatement, giving the listener the understanding that a value at the lower end of the scale is picked out instead. This is probably also what lies behind the claim in Johannesen (1997) that the high scalar elements seen in “store jenta”-constructions are used ironically.

Having reached this conclusion, it is interesting to note that attenuating high scalar value NPIs seem to be closely connected to understatement more generally. For one thing, Israel (1996) refers to these NPIs as “understaters”, and he suggests that they regularly appear in understatements, where less is said than actually meant. He gives the examples shown here as (18ab), with the minimiser *a wink* and the understater or attenuating NPI *much* (his examples (10ab), p. 625):

- (18)a. Margo didn't sleep a wink before her big test.
- b. Margo didn't sleep much before her big test.

Israel then comments on these examples as follows:

Intuitively, the difference between these sentences is obvious: [(18a)] makes a strong claim by denying that Margo slept even the smallest amount imaginable; [(18b)] makes a weak claim by denying only that Margo slept for a long time. In [(18a)], *a wink* marks a low, in fact a minimal, quantitative value and produces an emphatic sentence; in [(18b)], *much* marks a relatively high quantitative value and produces an understatement.

Israel (1996:625-626)

There is a certain truth in Israel's comment. Although (18b) literally denies only that Margo slept for a long time, it would normally not be uttered in order to convey exactly that. For example, if Margo normally sleeps eight hours every night, sleeping *much* for her would mean sleeping more than eight hours, perhaps nine or ten. Hence, if she sleeps exactly eight hours she does not sleep *much*. But that situation would not normally be reported as in (18b). In most cases, (18b) would be used to express that Margo slept significantly less than she normally does. Hence, it seems that the attenuating NPI *much* by convention goes along with understatement – or we might say that it does so in the pragmatically unmarked usage. It is also possible, though, to use a litotes expression like (18b) *without* understatement, but then it must be made clear that this is the intended interpretation.

If this reasoning concerning *much* is correct, then it appears that the “store jenta”-construction is simply a normal attenuating NPI, in that it makes reference to a high scalar value but by convention implies the opposite.

Another semantic property of the “store jenta”-construction that deserves mentioning is that the negation cannot target the noun — it must target the modifier. In this respect, “store jenta”-constructions differ from ordinary nominal phrases, which allow the negation to target any of the categories inside them. For example, in the phrase *ein lang togtur* ‘a long train journey’ in (19) either the adjective or the noun can be the target of negation, as shown:

- (19)a. Dei drog ikkje på noen LANG tog-tur — den var kort.  
 they set.out not on an long train-journey it was short  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a LONG train journey — it was short.’

- b. Dei drog ikkje på noen lang TOG-tur — dei kjørte bil.  
 they set.out not on any long train-journey they drove car  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a long TRAIN journey — they drove a car.’

But if we try to get the same contrast with a “store jenta”-construction, such as *lange togturen* in (20), it turns out that only one version works well, the version where the negation targets the modifier:

- (21)a. Dei drog ikkje på LANGE tog-turen — den var kort.  
 they set.out not on long.DEF train-journey.DEF it was short  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a LONG train journey — it was short.’

- b. \* Dei drog ikkje på lange TOG-turen — dei kjørte bil.  
 they set.out not on long.DEF train-journey.DEF they drove car  
 ‘They didn’t set out on a long TRAIN journey — they drove a car.’

In other words, the noun must be given in the discourse, and it cannot then have a contrastive function. At present I have no explanation for this fact.

#### 4. The definiteness problem

A very surprising property of the “store jenta”-construction is the definiteness marking. In this respect the construction is exceptional, since in Norwegian, if a definite nominal phrase contains a prenominal modifier, such as an adjective or a quantifier, there is normally both a prenominal and a (suffixed) postnominal definiteness marker.<sup>6</sup> This is the well-known “double definiteness”, also found in Swedish and Faroese. An example is given in (21).

- (21) den lang-e tur-en  
 DEF.MASC.SG long-DEF trip-DEF  
 ‘the long trip’

<sup>6</sup> There are however certain exceptions to this generalisation – see e.g. Julien (2005).

Nominal phrases in the “store jenta”-construction, by contrast, appear with only the suffixed definiteness marker, as we have already seen:

- (22)a. Ho var ikkje stor-e jent-a.  
she was not big-DEF girl-DEF  
‘She was no big girl.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje lang-e tur-en.  
we walked not long-DEF trip-DEF  
‘We did not walk a long distance.’

Moreover, unlike ordinary definite nominal phrases they do not give rise to existential presuppositions (see Strawson 1950 and the discussion in Giannakidou 1998:124–125). Thus, (22a) does not evoke the presupposition that there is any big girl, and (22b) does not mean that any long trip has taken place or that a specific long distance exists. This contrasts sharply with the readings we normally get if a prenominal definite determiner is added, as in (23):

- (23)a. Ho var ikkje den store jenta.  
she was not the big.DEF girl.DEF  
‘She was not the big girl.’
- b. Vi gikk ikkje den lange turen.  
we walked not the long.DEF trip.DEF  
‘We did not walk the long distance.’

Now we do get existential presuppositions. (23a) presupposes that there is or was a big girl, and (23b) presupposes that a long trip or distance existed or exists. Moreover, in both examples the reading is also specific: there is a particular big girl/long distance that both speaker and hearer have in mind. Thus, these nominal phrases have the reading that is typical of definite nominal phrases (see e.g. Lyons 1999:2–3). In addition, the scalar implicatures disappear, there is no need for the negation or any other NPI-

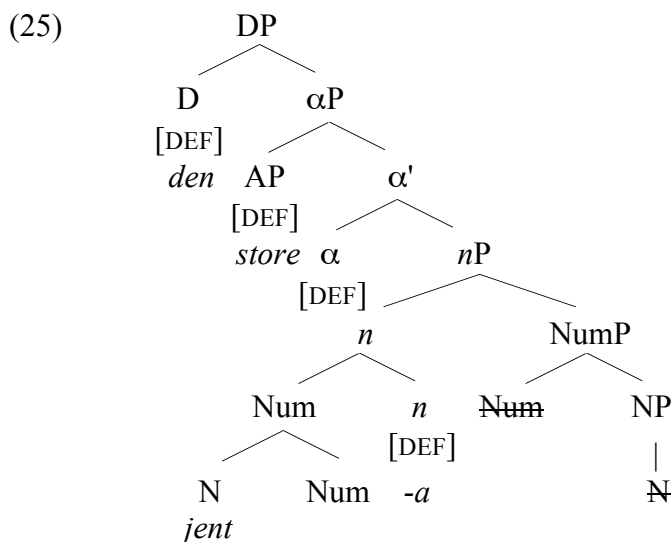


licensor, and adjectives representing the lower end of the scale are now just as acceptable as adjectives representing the upper end of the scale. The latter facts are demonstrated in (24).

- (24)a. Ho var (ikkje) den store/vesle jenta.  
 she was not the big.DEF/little.DEF girl.DEF  
 ‘She was (not) the big/little girl.’
- b. Vi gikk (ikkje) den lange/korte turen.  
 we walked not the long.DEF/short.DEF trip.DEF  
 ‘We did (not) walk the long/short distance.’

In other words, we are no longer dealing with the “store jenta”-construction at all. The question is then why this construction requires the suffixed definiteness marker while not allowing the preposed one.

Consider first the syntactic structure of a nominal phrase with a prenominal determiner, a prenominal adjective, and a head noun with a suffixed definiteness marker, such as for example those shown in (24ab). Following Julien (2005), these phrases have the structure shown in (25):<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Roehrs (2009) proposes a similar structure but with partly different labels.

As we see, the prenominal determiner spells out the D head, whereas the suffixed definiteness marker represents a lower functional head, called *n*. The phonological realisation of *n* as a suffix to the noun is the result of the noun having head-moved to *n*. If no adjectives or other modifiers intervene between D and *n*, the suffixed marker also represents D (see Julien 2005 or Roehrs 2009 for the technical details), but when there are adjectives or other modifiers between D and *n*, these two heads are spelled out separately, hence the “double definiteness”. When *n* is definite, all higher heads will also be definite, in agreement with *n*. This is why the definiteness shows up on all elements from *n* upwards, including adjective phrases, which I take to be specifiers of heads located between D and *n*.

Importantly, although D and *n* have the same value for definiteness, they make different contributions to the semantics of the phrase as a whole. This has been observed by several researchers in the field. Johannessen (1997) suggests that the prenominal determiner encodes deixis, whereas Anderssen (2005) and Julien (2005) both take the prenominal determiner to represent uniqueness (or, with a different term, inclusiveness) while the suffixed definiteness marker represents specificity. Then Roehrs (2009), after a thorough investigation of the two types of markers, concludes that “whereas the prenominal determiner brings about deictic, uniqueness, or generic reference, the postnominal one seems to be specific or expletive in interpretation” (Roehrs 2009:46-47). On all accounts, a nominal phrase that contains a prenominal modifier but no prenominal determiner should not be able to refer in the way that definite nominal phrases normally do. This is partly borne out, with the qualification that what matters is the presence of the D head, and not the presence of the prenominal determiner.

In Norwegian (and in Swedish, where the nominal syntax is very much the same) one can find several types of definite nominal phrases containing prenominal modifiers but without prenominal determiners. In cases where the reference of the DP as a whole equals the set that is picked out by D’s complement; that is, by those elements of the nominal phrase that have descriptive content, the prenominal determiner is optional (see Stroh-Wollin 2003, Julien 2005). This is true of nominal phrases headed by a proper name, as in (26a), and of phrases where a modifier helps pick out a unique referent in the relevant context, as in (26b) and (26c).

- (26)a. (Den) vesle Anna såg ein bjørn.  
           the little.DEF Anna saw a bear  
           '(The) Little Anna saw a bear.'
- b. Han heldt gitaren i (den) høgre handa.  
    he held guitar.DEF in the right hand.DEF  
    'He held the guitar in his right hand.'
- c. Dei diskuterte kven som hadde (den) beste bil.en.  
    they discussed who that had the best car.DEF  
    'They discussed who had the best car.'

Crucially, a D head is assumed to be present in (26abc). Its semantic contribution of deixis/uniqueness is noticed, but since it is identified by other elements that are present, D itself does not have to be spelled out, which means that the prenominal determiner is optional.

Nominal phrases containing a definite adjective and a definite noun, but with the prenominal determiner obligatory absent, are also found. There are at least the two types exemplified in (27):

- (27)a. Veit du ikkje det, (\*den) stor-e jent-a!  
       know you not that, DEF big.DEF girl-DEF  
       'Don't you know that, you big girl!'
- b. Klokka var 8 og det var (\*den) lyse dagen ute!  
    klock.DEF was 8 and it was the light.DEF day.DEF out  
    'It was 8 o'clock and broad daylight outside.'

The phrase in (27a) is a vocative, while the type in (27b), discussed in detail in Lundeby (1981), is semantically equivalent to an indefinite phrase. Moreover, as Lundeby points out, the adjective represents a property that is part of the semantic content of the noun. In neither case can the semantic features associated with the D head be noticed, and the

phrases are not referential. I take these facts as indications that the D head is missing in the phrases shown in (27).

On this background, I will assume that the D head is also missing in the “store jenta”-construction, and that this is the reason why there is no prenominal determiner, despite the obligatory presence of a prenominal modifier. The whole nominal phrase is just an  $\alpha$ P, or, in those cases where the prenominal modifier is a quantifier, the phrase as a whole is headed by the quantifier.

This proposal goes against Johannessen (1997), who assumes that since “store jenta”-constructions can function as arguments, they necessarily contain D heads. Her reasoning is based on the widely held belief that nominal arguments are necessarily DPs (see e.g. Delsing 1993, Longobardi 1994). However, Julien (2005, 2006) argues that nominal arguments can be structurally smaller than DPs. Her argumentation is based on the so-called bare nouns found in Norwegian and other Scandinavian varieties. Bare nouns are countable singular nouns, possibly in combination with an adjective, that appear without any definiteness or indefiniteness marking at all. Such bare nouns can be predicates or arguments, as the following Norwegian examples illustrate (see Julien 2006:116):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (28)a. Hege er lærar.<br>Hege is teacher<br>‘Hege is a teacher.’ | b. Hege kjøpte (ny) billett.<br>Hege bought new ticket<br>‘Hege bought a (new) ticket.’ |
|--|---|

But crucially, they can never have individual reference or establish discourse referents, a property that Julien attributes to the absence of a D head (see also Borthen 2003).

The “store jenta”-construction, also lacking a D head, is however formally definite in the sense that it has a [+definite] feature. This feature originates in *n* and spreads to the elements above *n*, so that both the noun itself and the adjective have definite form. Because of the definiteness feature the phrase is banned from many environments where bare nouns or indefinites are acceptable. On the other hand, in the absence of a D head the definiteness feature does not suffice to make the phrase referential. As a consequence, the phrase will not be acceptable in environments where ordinary referential

definite nominal phrases occur. Hence, “store jenta”-constructions have a very limited distribution — they can only appear in negative polarity contexts.

It should be pointed out that there exists definite NPIs whose form does not differ from what we see in ordinary nominal phrases. An example from Norwegian is given in (29):

- (29) Vi tre såg på kvarandre og skjønnte ikkje bær-a.  
 we three looked at each.other and understood not berry-DEF  
 ‘The three of us looked at each other, not understanding a thing.’

Here the definite nominal *bæra* ‘the berry’ functions as an NPI. Now if definiteness is the combination of specificity and uniqueness (see e.g. Enç 1991, Abbott 1999), we would expect this nominal to refer to a unique specific berry – which it does not. In fact, it does not refer to anything at all.

One possible explanation for the non-referentiality of *bæra* in (29) is that it is a part of the idiom (*ikkje*) *skjønne bæra* ‘(not) understand a thing’, and that consequently it is no more referential than *bucket* in *kick the bucket*. But there is also another possible explanation. As an NPI, *bæra* is a minimiser, which according to the account in Israel (1995:164) means that it is an inherently emphatic form encoding a low quantitative value. That is, it represents the lower end of a scale – in this case a scale representing the degree of understanding on the part of the subject. Concerning the referentiality of minimisers, Israel’s proposal is the following:

It is important to note that a minimizer’s q[uantitative]-value does not define an actual individual but simply marks a phantom minimal element on the scale. I call the element a ‘phantom’ because, lacking any inherent referential force of its own, it refers only by virtue of the entailments it licenses. The phantom is never experienced directly – it cannot, for example, establish discourse referents – but it makes itself known by virtue of its strategic position within the scale.

(Israel 1995:164)

On this account, *bæra* in (29) does not refer to anything since it only represents, in a phantom-like fashion, a minimal degree of understanding, and the relevant entailment

builds on this: the claim that not even this minimal degree of understanding was attained entails that no greater degree of understanding was attained either.

If we now return to the nominal phrases that appear in the “store jenta”-construction, we have already concluded that they are not minimisers. They are not maximisers either, but attenuating NPIs. Again somewhat surprisingly, it appears that attenuating NPIs with a high scalar value can also induce a phantom reference effect. Consider the examples in (30), where definite nominal phrases with a preposed and a suffixed determiner appear under negation:

(30)a.   Jula           hadde   ikkje (\*eingong) det   store   verdet   for   henne.  
           Christmas had   not   (even)   the   big.DEF value.DEF for   her  
           ‘Christmas had no great importance for her.’

b.   Det   var   ikkje (\*eingong) den   store   festen   på hotellet.  
       it   was   not   (even)   the   big.DEF party.DEF at hotel.DEF  
       ‘There was no big party at the hotel.’

As we see, these phrases are not compatible with *eingong* ‘even’, which indicates that they are not maximisers (cf. (14)). Since they nevertheless involve a high scalar value we must conclude that they are attenuating NPIs, a conclusion that goes well with the fact that they tend to be used in understatements. Moreover, despite their definite form they do not really refer. Rather, they could more accurately be described as having what Israel (1995) calls “phantom reference”. Hence, another conclusion is that attenuating high scalar NPIs can show the “phantom reference” effect.

Now if attenuating high scalar NPIs can have “phantom reference”, then it is possible that this is also the case with “store jenta”-constructions.<sup>8</sup> My proposal is therefore that while “store jenta”-constructions cannot actually refer, as we have seen, they can have “phantom reference”, and consequently, they will necessarily be NPIs.

<sup>8</sup> That “store jenta”-constructions could have “phantom reference” was suggested to me by Gillian Ramchand.

## 5. Distribution within the clause

So far, we have looked at the semantics and the internal syntax of the “store jenta”-construction. I will now turn to its external syntax. I will approach the issue from two directions: in this section, I deal with the question of which positions the “store jenta”-construction may occupy in a clause. To avoid playing with too many variables at a time I use the negation as licenser in most of the examples. Then in the next section I focus on the contexts in which the “store jenta”-construction is licensed, other than negated clauses.

I have already presented examples where the “store jenta”-construction have the syntactic function of a predicate, an object, or a part of an adverbial, and in (31) I give one more example of each type:

- (31)a. Mat var ikkje store problemet der.  
food was not big.DEF problem.DEF there  
‘Food was not a big problem there.’
- b. Den norske krona har ikkje lange historia.  
the Norwegian.DEF crown.DEF has not long history.DEF  
‘The Norwegian crown has no long history.’
- c. Eg handla ikkje for store summen.  
I shopped not for big.DEF sum.DEF  
‘I didn’t shop for a great sum.’

Still, since we have concluded that the “store jenta”-construction is a nominal phrase with a definiteness feature but no D head, we might expect these phrases to have a more restricted distribution than full DPs. This is borne out.

Note first that “store jenta”-constructions which are not subjects can undergo focus movement to clause-initial position:

- (32)a. Store jenta var ho ikkje.  
 big.DEF girl.DEF was she not  
 ‘A big girl, she was not.’
- b. Lange turen gikk vi ikkje.  
 long.DEF trip.DEF walked we not  
 ‘A long distance, we did not walk.’
- c. Store summen handla eg ikkje for.  
 big.DEF sum.DEF shopped I not for  
 ‘A great sum, I didn’t shop for.’

There are other Norwegian NPIs that can also be topicalised, such as the adverb *ennå* ‘yet’, shown in (33) (see Lindstad 1999:11), but NPIs that resist topicalisation are also found, for example *noen som helst* ‘anyone at all’, as shown in (34):

- (33)a. Dei er ikkje heime ennå.  
 they are not at.home yet  
 ‘They are not at home yet.’
- b. Ennå er dei ikkje heime.  
 yet are they not at.home
- (34)a. Dei såg ikkje noen som helst.  
 they saw not anyone at all  
 ‘They did not see anyone at all.’
- b. \* Noen som helst såg dei ikkje.  
 anyone at all saw they not

We can conclude that “store jenta”-constructions are more flexible than certain other NPIs, but they are not unique in their ability to be topicalised.



Concerning NPIs in subject positions, van der Wouden (1997:165–166) points out that NPIs can be subjects in English and Dutch if a licenser is topicalised or located in a higher clause. This also holds for *noen som helst*:

(35)a. Aldri har noen som helst brydd seg om dette.  
 never has anyone at all cared REFL about this  
 ‘Never has anyone at all cared about this.’

b. Dei tvilte på at noen som helst hadde vori der.  
 they doubted on that anyone at all had been there  
 ‘They doubted that anyone at all had been there.’

But “store jenta”-constructions cannot be licensed in this way. As we will see in the next section, both *aldri* ‘never’ and *tvile på* ‘doubt’ can license “store jenta”-constructions in other cases, so the problem with (36) and (37) must be structural:

(36)a. \* Aldri har store jenta banka på døra.  
 never has big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘Never has any big girl knocked on the door.’

b. \* Aldri har lange stykket stått i avisa om dette.  
 never has long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this  
 ‘Never has any long piece appeared in the paper about this.’

(37)a. \* Dei tvilte på at store jenta banka på døra.  
 they doubted on that big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘They doubted that any big girl knocked on the door.’

b. \* Dei tvilte på at lange stykket sto i avisa om dette.  
 they doubted on that long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this  
 ‘They doubted that any long piece appeared in the paper about this.’

It is also impossible to have a “store jenta”-construction as a subject in initial position, at least as long as it is followed by the licenser:<sup>9</sup>

- (38)a. \* Store jenta banka ikkje på døra.  
 big.DEF girl.DEF knocked not on door.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘No big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \* Lange stykket sto ikkje i avisa om dette.  
 long.DEF piece.DEF stood not in paper.DEF about this  
 Intended meaning: ‘No long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. \* Mange timane gikk ikkje før eg var lei.  
 many hours.DEF passed not before I was tired  
 Intended meaning: ‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

“Store jenta”-constructions with quantifiers can appear as subjects in initial position if the negation moves along, so that we have constituent negation instead of clausal negation. For some reason this does not work if the constructions contains an adjective:

<sup>9</sup> Janne Bondi Johannessen (p.c.) suggests that the reason might be that “store jenta”-constructions are not definite, as we have seen. Indefinites are disfavoured in the canonical subject position in Norwegian. Instead, presentational constructions are preferred. However, (38a) is much worse than (i):

- (i) Ei lita jente banka på døra.  
 a little girl knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘A little girl knocked on the door.’

Moreover, even bare nouns can appear in subject position, although these arguably also lack the DP layer (see Julien 2006):

- (ii) Raud kjole blir finast.  
 red dress becomes finest  
 ‘A red dress will look best.’

Hence, I think their conflicting feature makeup is what makes “store jenta”-constructions so uncomfortable in subject position. Also note that using a presentational construction instead does not always help — see (43). This is quite different from the behaviour of ordinary indefinite phrases.

(39)a. \* Ikkje store jenta banka på døra.

not big.DEF girl.DEF knocked on door.DEF

Intended meaning: ‘No big girl knocked on the door.’

b. \* Ikkje lange stykket sto i avisa om dette.

not long.DEF piece.DEF stood in paper.DEF about this

Intended meaning: ‘No long piece appeared in the paper about this.’

c. Ikkje mange timane gikk før eg var lei.

not many hours.DEF passed before I was tired

‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

The conclusion that tentatively can be drawn from the examples we have seen so far is that a “store jenta”-construction must be merged in a position where it will be c-commanded by its licenser, and the only way it can move past its licenser is by topicalisation. Hence, it seems that it can be A-bar-moved but not A-moved.<sup>10</sup>

It turns out, however, that there are further problems with having “store jenta”-constructions as subjects. Normally, Norwegian subjects that are not in initial position can precede or follow the negation, as demonstrated in (40).

<sup>10</sup> In addition, there is the requirement that any intervening non-licensing operator is not allowed. Thus, examples parallel to those discussed by Linebarger (1980:31) can be constructed:

(i) Dei prata ikkje mye fordi dei var nervøse.  
they talked not much because they were nervous  
‘They didn’t talk much because they were nervous.’

(ii) Dei sa ikkje mange orda fordi dei var nervøse.  
they said not many words.DEF because they were nervous  
‘They didn’t say many words, because they were nervous.’

The (i) example is ambiguous, since the *because*-clause can be inside or outside the scope of the negation. In (ii), by contrast, there is no ambiguity — the *because*-clause can only be outside the scope of the negation. Following Linebarger, if it were inside the scope of the negation, it would be an intervening operator breaking up the relation between the negation and the NPI.

- (40)a. I går        banka    den    store    jenta    ikkje på døra.  
 yesterday    knocked the    big.DEF   girl.DEF   not    on door.DEF  
 ‘Yesterday the big girl did not knock on the door.’
- b. I går        banka    ikkje den    store    jenta    på døra.  
 yesterday    knocked not    the    big.DEF   girl.DEF   on door.DEF  
 ‘Yesterday the big girl did not knock on the door.’

But as shown in (41), “store jenta”-constructions with subject function cannot precede the negation:<sup>11</sup>

- (41)a. \* I går        banka    store    jenta    ikkje på døra.  
 yesterday    knocked big.DEF   girl.DEF   not    on door.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘Yesterday no big girl knocked on the door.’
- b. \* I går        sto    lange        stykket    ikkje i    avisa        om        dette.  
 yesterday    stood long.DEF   piece.DEF   not    in    paper.DEF   about    this  
 Intended meaning: ‘Yesterday no long piece appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. \* I går        gikk    mange    timane    ikkje før        eg    var    lei.  
 yesterday    passed   many    hours.DEF   not    before   I    was    tired  
 Intended meaning: ‘Yesterday not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

The examples in (42) show that when they instead follow the negation, some of them get a more positive judgement, whereas others are no better in this position than in the position preceding the negation:

<sup>11</sup> Benmamoun (1997) argues that in Moroccan Arabic, NPIs are licensed in subject position if they are in a Spec-head relation with (a head that contains) the negation. Either this does not work in Norwegian or else the subjects in (41) are not in the Spec of an appropriate head. If the subject sits in Spec-TP, the negation sits in the Spec of the Neg head, and there is no movement of the Neg head to T, the facts are explained (see e.g. Jensen 2001, Zeijlstra 2005).

(42)a. \* I går        banka        ikkje        store        jenta        på døra.  
 yesterday    knocked    not        big.DEF   girl.DEF   on door.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘Yesterday no big girl knocked on the door.’

b. ? I går        sto        ikkje        lange        stykket        i        avisa        om        dette.  
 yesterday    stood    not        long.DEF   piece.DEF   in   paper.DEF   about    this  
 ‘Yesterday no long piece appeared in the paper about this.’

c. ? I går        gikk        ikkje        mange    timane        før        eg        var        lei.  
 yesterday    passed   not        many    hours.DEF   before   I        was    tired  
 ‘Yesterday not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

It is not immediately obvious what the relevant difference is between (42a) on the one hand and (42bc) on the other. One possibility, suggested to me by Helge Lødrup (p.c.), is that the verbs in (42b) and (42c) are unaccusative, and consequently, the “subjects” can be taken to occupy the object position.

Regardless of what lies behind the contrast seen in (42), the same effect is found when phrases of the “store jenta”-type appear as associates of an expletive subject in presentational constructions, in which case they necessarily follow the negation:

(43)a. \* Det        banka        ikkje        store        jenta        på døra.  
 it        knocked    not        big.DEF   girl.DEF   on door.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘There was no big girl knocking on the door.’

b. Det        sto        ikkje        lange        stykket        i        avisa        om        dette.  
 it        stood    not        long.DEF   piece.DEF   in   paper.DEF   about    this  
 ‘There was no long piece in the paper about this.’

c. Det        gikk        ikkje        mange    timane        før        eg        var        lei.  
 it        passed   not        many    hours.DEF   before   I        was    tired  
 ‘Not many hours passed before I was tired of it.’

Ordinary definite nominal phrases cannot appear in this position (see e.g. Delsing 1993:128–129), so the grammaticality of (43b) and (43c) is in itself an indication that “store jenta”-constructions are not really definite, despite the definite morphology. Moreover, the presentational construction requires the verb to be non-agentive, or at least that its potential agentivity is not at the forefront, and it is possible that the argumental phrase is in object position (although the presentational construction is not a straightforward test for unaccusativity in Scandinavian, since it allows verbs like *work* and *dance*, see e.g. Faarlund et al. 1997:830–832). If this is correct, we can conclude that most “store jenta”-constructions cannot occupy any surface subject position.

Finally, when “store jenta”-phrases appear in the focus position of a cleft construction, the result is always fully grammatical, even in cases where the focused constituent corresponds to the subject of the non-cleft counterpart of the construction:

- (44)a. Det var ikkje store jenta som banka på døra.  
 it was not big girl.DEF that knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘It was no big girl that knocked on the door.’
- b. Det var ikkje lange stykket som sto i avisa om dette.  
 it was not long piece.DEF that stood in paper.DEF about this  
 ‘It was no long piece that appeared in the paper about this.’
- c. Det var ikkje mange timane som gikk før eg var lei.  
 it was not many hours.DEF that passed before I was tired  
 ‘It was not many hours that passed before I was tired of it.’

The reason for this might be that the “store jenta”-constructions in (44) are formally predicates and not subjects.

For comparison, I show in (45) how the NPI *noen som helst* ‘anybody at all’ behaves in the positions where “store jenta”-constructions were tested:

- (45)a. \* Noen som helst banka ikkje på døra.  
 anyone at all knocked not on door.DEF

- b. Ikkje noen som helst banka på døra.  
 not anyone at all knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘Nobody at all knocked on the door.’
- c. \* I går banka noen som helst ikkje på døra.  
 yesterday knocked anyone at all not on door.DEF
- d. I går banka ikkje noen som helst på døra.  
 yesterday knocked not anyone at all on door.DEF  
 ‘Nobody at all knocked on the door.’
- e. Det banka ikkje noen som helst på døra.  
 it knocked not anyone at all on door.DEF  
 ‘Nobody at all knocked on the door.’
- f. Det var ikkje noen som helst som banka på døra.  
 it was not anybody at all who knocked on door.DEF  
 ‘It wasn’t anybody at all who knocked on the door.’

As we see, *noen som helst* can be clause-initial only if the negation comes along, and it has to follow the negation also when it appears in other positions. In short, it behaves like the more flexible “store jenta”-constructions, and we can conclude that “store jenta”-constructions do not in general have an exceptional external syntax.

## 6. Licensing contexts

It is well known that some NPIs put more specific requirements on their licensing conditions than others. This has been discussed by many researchers working on polarity elements. In the following, I will first present some facts concerning the licensing of “store jenta”-constructions, and then I will discuss these facts in the light of the theories of Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997), and Giannakidou (1998). These three approaches are chosen because they have been very influential since their introduction, which is not to say that there has not been any development in NPI theory in later years.

My aim is to use these approaches to shed some more light on the “store jenta”-construction itself, and possibly also be able to compare the approaches to some degree.

As my test cases I will use three “store jenta”-constructions with different syntactic functions: the predicate in (46), the object of an agentive verb in (47), and the object of a stative verb in (48).

(46) Ho var ikkje store jenta.  
she was not big.DEF girl.DEF  
‘She was no big girl.’

(47) Vi gikk ikkje lange turen.  
we walked not long.DEF trip.DEF  
‘We walked no long distance.’

(48) Dei hadde ikkje store sjansane.  
they had not big.DEF chances.DEF  
‘They had no big chances.’

These constructions will be compared to three other Norwegian NPIs, all minimisers: the idiomatic *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’, with an indefinite noun, and *skjønne bæra* (literally ‘understand the berry’) ‘understand a thing’, with a definite noun, and with *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’.

### 6.1 Licensors of “store jenta”-constructions

I will start by showing that the nominal phrase *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ in subject position licenses all the NPIs under investigation:

(49) Ingen av dei sa noe som helst.  
none of them said anything at all  
‘None of them said anything at all.’



- (50) Ingen av dei løfta ein finger.  
 none of them lifted a finger  
 ‘None of them lifted a finger.’
- (51) Ingen av dei skjønte bæra.  
 none of them understood berry.DEF  
 ‘None of them understood a thing.’
- (52) ? Ingen av dei var store jenta.  
 none of them was big girl.DEF  
 ‘None of them was a big girl.’
- (53) ? Ingen av dei gikk lange turen.  
 none of them walked long trip.DEF  
 ‘None of them walked a long distance.’
- (54) Ingen av dei hadde store sjansane.  
 none of them had big chances.DEF  
 ‘None of them had any big chances.’

Concerning the question marks in (52) and (53), I think they simply mean that the constructions need more context in order to be immediately accepted by the speakers. As Janne Bondi Johannessen points out to me, (53) gets perfect if there is for example a continuation like ‘...since they had to get home for dinner’. I feel confident that (52) would also improve in the right context.<sup>12</sup>

More generally, when speakers of Norwegian are confronted with a less frequent combination involving a “store jenta”-construction, they tend to react slightly negatively, but this reaction does not necessarily mean that the combination is in any way ungrammatical. On the contrary, I think that the “store jenta”-construction has the

<sup>12</sup> For her, there is another problem in (52), in that the subject does not agree in number with the predicate — *ingen* being a plural form in her variety of Norwegian. For me, this problem does not exist since *ingen* is necessarily a singular form (the plural would be *inga*).

potential of appearing in more different contexts than what we normally see. More often than not, it is licensed by the negation. For example, searching for the string <negation + adjective + definite noun> in the Oslo corpus returns over 100 relevant examples, but if the negation is replaced by *aldri* ‘never’, there are no hits at all. A Google search for <*aldri mange timene*> ‘never many hours.DEF’ gave 6 hits, as compared to 4620 hits for <*ikke mange timene*> ‘not many hours.DEF’. This indicates that although the “store jenta”-construction is very rarely licensed by *aldri*, the combination is possible — as demonstrated in the following examples:

- (55) Ho sa aldri noe som helst.  
 she said never anything at all  
 ‘She never said anything at all.’
- (56) Ho løfta aldri ein finger.  
 she lifted never a finger  
 ‘She never lifted a finger.’
- (57) Ho skjønte aldri bæra.  
 she understood never berry.DEF  
 ‘She never understood a thing.’
- (58) ? Ho var aldri store jenta.  
 she was never big.DEF girl.DEF  
 ‘She was never a big girl.’
- (59) Vi gikk aldri lange turen.  
 we walked never long.DEF trip.DEF  
 ‘We never walked a long distance.’
- (60) Dei hadde aldri store sjansane.  
 they had never big.DEF chances.DEF  
 ‘They never had any big chances.’

We see, however, that the predicative “store jenta”-construction in (58) is slightly degraded. I think this is due to pragmatics, since the use of *aldri* might seem to imply that her being a big girl fluctuates over time. If the copula *var* ‘was’ is instead replaced by *vart* ‘became’, the construction gets perfectly fine:

- (61) Ho   vart       aldri       store    jenta.  
       she   became never   big.DEF girl.DEF  
       ‘She never grew to be a big girl.’

I will therefore conclude that “store jenta”-constructions in general can be licensed by *aldri* ‘never’.

The next licenser to be considered is the adverbial *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’. As we see in (62)–(67), *på ingen måte* licenses *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’ and the “store jenta”-constructions, but there are some problems with *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ (on the idiomatic interpretation) and *skjønne bæra* ‘understand a thing’:

- (62) Ho   sa       på ingen måte noe som helst.  
       she   said   in no    way anything at all  
       ‘She said in no way anything at all.’

- (63) ?? Ho   løfta på ingen måte ein   finger.  
       she   lifted in no    way a       finger  
       ‘She lifted in no way a finger.’

- (64) ?? Ho   skjønnte    på ingen måte bæra.  
       she   understood in no    way berry.DEF  
       ‘She understood in no way a thing.’

- (65) Ho   var    på ingen måte store jenta.  
       she   was   in no    way big    girl.DEF  
       ‘She was in no way a big girl.’

- (66) Vi gikk på ingen måte lange turen.  
 we walked in no way long trip.DEF  
 ‘We walked in no way a long distance.’
- (67) Dei hadde på ingen måte store sjansane.  
 they had in no way big chances.DEF  
 ‘They had no big chances.’

Again I think the explanation is found in pragmatics. Since the minimisers *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ and *skjønne bæra* (lit. ‘understand the berry’) are idiomatic, *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’ is hard to interpret in combination with these expressions, since we don’t know what it would mean to “understand the berry” in this or that way. But it should be noted that in the right context, licensing of idiomatic NPIs by *på ingen måte* gets better. For *løfte ein finger* a literal interpretation is however also available — although the expression is then not an NPI — and then it may well combine with *på ingen måte*. The fact that “store jenta”-constructions are unproblematic in the context of *på ingen måte* is then an indication that they are not idiomatic. They are formed productively but regulated by certain constraints.

The nominal phrase *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’, shown in (68)–(73), can license the three minimisers, but it is less good with “store jenta”-constructions, although there is some variation between speakers:

- (68) Nesten ingen sa noe som helst.  
 almost nobody said anything at all  
 ‘Almost nobody said anything at all.’
- (69) Nesten ingen løfta ein finger.  
 almost nobody lifted a finger  
 ‘Almost nobody lifted a finger.’

- (70) Nesten ingen skjønte bæra.  
 almost nobody understood berry.DEF  
 ‘Almost nobody understood a thing.’
- (71) ?\* Nesten ingen var store jenta.  
 almost nobody was big girl.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody was a big girl.’
- (72) ?\* Nesten ingen gikk lange turen.  
 almost nobody walked long trip.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody walked a long distance.’
- (73) ?\* Nesten ingen hadde store sjansane.  
 almost nobody had big chances.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘Almost nobody had any big chances.’

If we now go back to (37), we saw there that *tvile på* ‘doubt’ could not license a “store jenta”-construction in the subject position of its complement clause. On the other hand, the following set of examples shows that *tvile på* is a possible licenser for all the NPIs in our test set, and that it can license even “store jenta”-constructions across a clause boundary, as long as the “store jenta”-constructions are not in subject position:

- (74) Eg tvilar på at ho sa noe som helst.  
 I doubt on that she said anything at all  
 ‘I doubt that she said anything at all.’
- (75) Eg tvilar på at ho løfta ein finger.  
 I doubt on that she lifted a finger  
 ‘I doubt that she lifted a finger.’

- (76) Eg tvilar på at ho skjønte bæra.  
 I doubt on that she understood berry.DEF  
 ‘I doubt that she understood a thing.’
- (77) Eg tvilar på at ho var store jenta.  
 I doubt on that she was big girl.DEF  
 ‘I doubt that she was a big girl.’
- (78) Eg tvilar på at dei gikk lange turen.  
 I doubt on that they walked long trip.DEF  
 ‘I doubt that they walked a long distance.’
- (79) Eg tvilar på at dei hadde store sjansane.  
 I doubt on that they had big chances.DEF  
 ‘I doubt that they had any big chances.’

Furthermore, all the NPIs in our test set are licensed in polarity questions, as we see in (80)–(85):

- (80) Sa ho noe som helst?  
 said she anything at all  
 ‘Did she say anything at all?’
- (81) Løfta ho (nokon gong) ein finger?  
 lifted she any time a finger  
 ‘Did she (ever) lift a finger?’ [negative answer expected]
- (82) Skjønte ho bæra?  
 understood she berry.DEF  
 ‘Did she understand a thing?’ [negative answer expected]

- (83) Var ho store jenta?  
 was she big girl.DEF  
 ‘Was she a big girl?’ [negative answer expected]
- (84) Gikk dei lange turen?  
 walked they long trip.DEF  
 ‘Did they walk a long distance?’ [negative answer expected]
- (85) Hadde dei store sjansane?  
 had they big chances.DEF  
 ‘Had they any big chances?’ [negative answer expected]

One can note, though, that polarity questions involving idiomatic minimisers or “store jenta”-constructions have what is sometimes called a negative rhetorical effect. As Guerzoni (2004) points out, a more accurate term is *negative bias*. The questions signal that a negative answer is expected, and because of this, they can be answered negatively with a plain ‘no’, but an affirmative answer will have to explicitly counter the expectation and thus contain more than just ‘yes’. Guerzoni suggests that this effect is typical of minimisers, but since “store jenta”-constructions are not minimisers, one could suggest instead that the effect is connected to “phantom reference”.

The last NPI-licensing context to be tested here is conditional clauses. Conditionals are known to license NPIs in their antecedents, and as we see below, *noe som helst* and *løfte ein finger* can be licensed in this way. For *skjønne bæra* and “store jenta”-constructions, on the other hand, conditionals are not licensors.

- (86) Viss ho seier noe som helst, så bør du høre etter.  
 if she says anything at all so ought you listen  
 ‘If she says anything at all, you should listen.’
- (87) Viss ho løftar ein finger, så er det av tvang.  
 if she lifts a finger so is it of force  
 ‘If she lifts a finger it is through force.’

(88) ?\* Viss ho skjønner bæra, så blir læraren glad.  
 if she understands berry.DEF so becomes teacher.DEF happy  
 Intended meaning: ‘If she understands a thing the teacher gets happy.’

(89) \* Viss ho er store jenta, så kan ho bli med.  
 if she was big girl.DEF so can she become with  
 Intended meaning: ‘If she is a big girl she can come along.’

(90) \* Viss dei gikk lange turen, så vart dei sikkert slitne.  
 if they walked long trip.DEF so became they certainly tired  
 Intended meaning: ‘If they walked a long distance they certainly got tired.’

(91) \* Viss dei har store sjansane, så får vi veta det.  
 if they have big chances.DEF so get we know it  
 Intended meaning: ‘If they had any big chances we will get to know it.’

Now for the sake of the overview, our whole test battery is summarised in table 2  
 (where NB stands for *negative bias*):

	<i>ingen av dei</i>	<i>aldri</i>	<i>på ingen måte</i>	<i>nesten ingen</i>	<i>tvile på</i>	polarity question	conditional clause
<i>noe som helst</i>	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
<i>løfte ein finger</i>	OK	OK	?*	OK	OK	NB	OK
<i>skjønne bæra</i>	OK	OK	?*	OK	OK	NB	?*
<i>var store jenta</i>	?	OK	OK	?*	OK	NB	*
<i>gikk lange turen</i>	?	OK	OK	?*	OK	NB	*
<i>hadde store sjansane</i>	OK	OK	OK	?*	OK	NB	*

Table 2: Summary of NPI licensing

We see here that there is considerable variation both within the set of licensors and within the set of NPIs. We don’t find two licensors that have exactly the same effect, neither are there two NPIs that behave exactly the same. But I have already suggested, there are cases where a licensor and an NPI cannot be combined for pragmatic reasons.



If we ignore the pragmatic problems and look at our data from a purely syntactic point of view, we have one class of licensors, represented here by *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’, *aldri* ‘never’, *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’, and *tvile på* ‘doubt’, which license all the NPIs under discussion, another class, consisting of *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’, which licenses the minimisers but not “store jenta”-constructions, and a third class, consisting of polarity questions and conditional clauses, which do not tolerate “store jenta”-constructions, at least not without complications, and show variable behaviour with idiomatic NPIs. The question is now how these facts can be handled by the three theories of polarity mentioned above.

## 6.2 Progovac (1994)

In the theory of Progovac (1994), the syntactic behaviour of NPIs is explained on the basis of Binding Theory. That is, she proposes that NPIs are subject to binding principles, although there is some variation between different NPIs and between different languages when it comes to the details. Some NPIs are subject to Principle A of the Binding Theory, i.e. they behave like anaphors and need a clausemate binder, whereas other NPIs are subject to Principle B of the Binding Theory, i.e. they behave like pronouns and will not accept a clausemate binder, although they need a binder within their binding domain (Progovac 1994:56). In either case, the binder is either a visibly negative element, or, in NPI licensing contexts like questions and conditionals, where there is no negative element, the binder is an empty polarity operator sitting in the C-projection (Progovac 1994:62). For adversative predicates like *doubt* Progovac proposes that they select clausal complements with a polarity operator in C (Progovac 1994:67). In addition, she assumes that some polarity items are able to move at LF, so that what seems to be a long-distance binding relation is in fact a local one, with the polarity item raised into the vicinity of the licensor (Progovac 1994:56).

Concerning idiomatic NPIs, Progovac (1994:102–103) proposes that they are listed in the lexicon as negative. That is, the negation is part of the lexical item itself, and because of this, idiomatic NPIs necessarily appear with a clausemate negation. It also follows that in polarity questions containing idiomatic NPIs, the polarity operator in the C-domain must have a negative value, and consequently, these questions get what she

calls a negative rhetorical reading, which, as already noted, is another term for the negative bias discussed by Guerzoni (2004).

In our test set there are two idiomatic NPIs: *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ and *skjønne bæra* ‘understand the berry/a thing’. The ability of these NPIs to be licensed by the clausemate licensors *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’, *aldri* ‘never’ and *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’ is in line with Progovac’s proposal, and so is the possibility of licensing by the adversative predicate *tvile på* ‘doubt’ in a higher clause and the biased reading they force on polarity questions. For *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’ the pragmatic problems I have pointed out earlier might still suffice as an explanation of why this adverbial is sometimes less than perfect with the idiomatic NPIs. But the fact that the two idiomatic NPIs do not get the same judgements in conditional clause is unexpected on Progovac’s analysis.

*Noe som helst* ‘anything at all’ is easier to account for within Progovac’s model. This polarity item is apparently of the anaphoric type and can be licensed by visible or invisible clausemate binders.

It is however hard to see how “store jenta”-constructions could fit into Progovac’s system. Since they are licensed by the clausemate licensors *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’, *aldri* ‘never’ and *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’, we must conclude that they are NPIs of the anaphoric type, obeying principle A of the binding theory. But we cannot then explain why they are not licensed by clausemate *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’. Moreover, following Progovac’s model we would have to say that “store jenta”-constructions are licensed by the operator that sits in the C of clausal complements to *tvile på* ‘doubt’, but then one must wonder why they are *not* licensed by the operator that Progovac assumes to be present in the C-domain of conditional clauses. It is also unclear why we get a negative bias when “store jenta”-constructions appear in polarity questions, since “store jenta”-constructions are not idioms. If we say that “store jenta”-constructions nevertheless come with a negative feature from the lexicon, then the question is if there are any NPIs at all that are not listed as negative. On the whole, Progovac’s model does not seem to be fine-grained enough to capture all the variation found among polarity sensitive elements.

### 6.3 Van der Wouden (1997)

Let us now see how the NPIs in our test set would be analysed in the approach of van der Wouden (1997), which builds on works like Ladusaw (1979) and Zwarts (1998). According to van der Wouden, NPIs of the weakest type only require a licenser that is monotone decreasing, whereas medium strong NPIs need a licenser that is also anti-additive (van der Wouden 1997:130). *Monotone decreasing* is defined as in (92) (cf. van der Wouden 1997:95), and *anti-additive* is defined as in (93) (cf. van der Wouden 1997:99):

(92) DEFINITION OF MONOTONE DECREASING

Let  $B$  and  $B^*$  be two Boolean algebras. A function  $f$  from  $B$  to  $B^*$  is monotone decreasing iff for arbitrary elements  $X, Y \in B$ :  $X \subseteq Y \Rightarrow f(Y) \subseteq f(X)$

(93) DEFINITION OF ANTI-ADDITIVE

Let  $B$  and  $B^*$  be two Boolean algebras. A function  $f$  from  $B$  to  $B^*$  is anti-additive iff for arbitrary elements  $X, Y \in B$ :  $f(X \cup Y) = f(X) \cap f(Y)$

In van der Wouden's terms, a monotone decreasing expression constitutes *minimal negation*, whereas anti-additive expressions are referred to as *regular negation* (van der Wouden 1997:130).

The following examples will serve to demonstrate that the Norwegian nominal phrase *nesten ingen* 'almost nobody' is monotone decreasing, since (94a) entails (94b), as indicated:

(94)a. Nesten ingen    å    fisk.  
         almost nobody ate fish  
         'Almost nobody ate fish.'

⇒ b. Nesten ingen    å    kveite.  
         almost nobody ate halibut  
         'Almost nobody ate halibut.'

The phrase is however not anti-additive; (95a) is not equivalent to (95b):

(95)a. Nesten ingen sang eller dansa.  
 almost nobody sang or danced  
 ‘Almost nobody sang or danced.’

⇔ Nesten ingen sang og nesten ingen dansa.  
 almost nobody sang and almost nobody danced  
 ‘Almost nobody sang and almost nobody danced.’

Since we have seen that “store jenta”-constructions are not licensed by *nesten ingen*, we can conclude that “store jenta”-constructions are not weak NPIs, according to van der Wouden’s classification. The three NPIs *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’, *løfte ein finger* ‘lift a finger’ and *skjønne bæra* ‘understand a thing’, by contrast, all belong to this class, since they are licensed by minimal negation.

By contrast, we saw in (49)–(54) that the nominal phrase *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ licensed all the NPIs in our test battery. And as demonstrated in (96), *ingen av dei* is anti-additive:

(96)a. Ingen av dei sang eller dansa.  
 none of them sang or danced  
 ‘None of them sang or danced.’

⇔ b. Ingen av dei sang og ingen av dei dansa.  
 none of them sang and none of them danced  
 ‘None of them sang and none of them danced.’

Since *ingen av dei* is a regular negation, it is of course expected that this phrase should license the weak NPIs, which only require minimal negation for their licensing.<sup>13</sup> The interesting point is that *ingen av dei* also licenses “store jenta”-constructions. Hence, “store jenta”-constructions are NPIs of medium strength.

<sup>13</sup> I do not include an example to show that *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ is also monotone decreasing. This should not be necessary, since anti-additive expressions are a subset of the monotone decreasing expressions (van der Wouden 1998:99).

The negative adverb *aldri* ‘never’ and the negative verb *tvile på* ‘doubt’ also license all the NPIs in our set, and as we now might expect, *aldri* and *tvile på* are anti-additive:

(97)a. Ho røykte eller drakk aldri.  
 she smoked or drank never  
 ‘She never smoked or drank.’

⇔ b. Ho røykte aldri og ho drakk aldri.  
 she smoked never and she drank never  
 ‘She never smoked and she never drank.’

(98)a. Eg tvilar på at ho røykte eller drakk.  
 I doubt on that she smoked or drank  
 ‘I doubt that she smoked or drank.’

⇔ b. Eg tvilar på at ho røykte og eg tvilar på at ho  
 I doubt on that she smoked and I doubt on that she  
 drakk.  
 drank  
 ‘I doubt that she smoked and I doubt that she drank.’

In fact, van der Wouden (1997:108) claims that all verbs with negative properties are anti-additive. They are never weaker, i.e. only monotone decreasing, and never stronger. But the problem is that for example the verb *angre* ‘regret’ does not license “store jenta”-constructions, although it licenses the weak NPI *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’:

(99) Eg angrar på at eg sa noe som helst.  
 I regret on that I said anything at all  
 ‘I regret that I said anything at all.’

- (100) \* Dei angrar på at dei gikk lange turen.  
 they regret on that they walked long trip.DEF  
 Intended meaning: ‘They regret that they walked a long distance.’

Here, van der Wouden’s classification seems to fail (but note that the contrast in (99)–(100) would also be a problem for Progovac).

Moreover, as van der Wouden (1997:159) points out, the tests he has proposed for the various types of negativity are not directly applicable to questions, although it is a well-known fact that polarity questions can be NPI licensors. He notes, though, that since questions license weak NPIs and NPIs of medium strength, but not strong NPIs, it seems that questions should be associated with the medium type of negation, i.e. regular negation.<sup>14</sup> Still, the negative bias that we get in some cases is unexplained.

As for conditionals, van der Wouden (1997:163) suggests that the reason why conditionals can license NPIs is that conditionals are monotone decreasing system-internally, as he calls it, with reference to Kas (1993). System-internally means here that the inferences are made strictly on the basis of data found within the inferential system itself. This would explain why conditionals are not able to license “store jenta”-constructions, since, as we have seen, more than just downward monotonicity is required to license these expressions. The problem still remains, however, that in van der Wouden’s

<sup>14</sup> I have left strong NPIs and their licensors, called *classical negation* by van der Wouden (1997), out of the discussion, since these concepts are not relevant for the “store jenta”-constructions. I can however, for the sake of illustration, give one example of a strong NPI in Norwegian. The superlative form *verst*, literally meaning ‘worst’, is also an NPI that in the combination *ikkje verst* ‘not bad’ can get an understatement reading, so that *ikkje verst* then means ‘quite good’:

- (i) Sausen var ikkje verst.  
 sauce.DEF was not worst  
 ‘The sauce wasn’t worst.’ OR ‘The sauce wasn’t bad (it was quite good).’

But if *ikkje* ‘not’ is replaced by *aldri* ‘never’, only the literal reading of *verst* is available:

- (ii) Sausen var aldri verst.  
 sauce.DEF was never worst  
 ‘The sauce was never worst.’

Hence, it seems that *verst* with the understatement reading is a strong NPI.

model it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms are that enable polarity questions and conditional clauses to act as NPI licensors.

#### 6.4 Giannakidou (1998)

The problem with showing that interrogatives and conditionals are monotone decreasing is among the factors that lead Giannakidou (1998) to reject downward monotonicity as the key concept for NPI licensing. Instead, she proposes that licensing contexts for polarity sensitive elements in general are characterised by being *nonveridical*. To put it simply, a propositional operator is nonveridical if *Op p* does not entail *p* (see Giannakidou 1998:106). This approach tackles questions and conditional clauses directly: neither questions nor conditionals preserve the truth of the propositions involved or require that these propositions be true in the context (see Giannakidou 1998:130–134 for a more detailed treatment). Hence, they are nonveridical, and their ability to license polarity sensitive elements follows. For determiners and quantifiers, being nonveridical in a context means, in Giannakidou's terms, not requiring that the denotation of the NP argument is nonempty in that context (Giannakidou 1998:121). She further states that determiners and quantifiers that are downward entailing, which is another term for monotone decreasing/downward monotonic, are also necessarily nonveridical (Giannakidou 1998:122).

A subset of the class of polarity sensitive elements put stronger requirements on their licensors, according to Giannakidou, in that they can only appear in contexts that are *antiveridical*. Antiveridicality is a special case of nonveridicality; for a propositional operator it is the property of entailing  $\neg p$  when applied to *p* (Giannakidou 1998:106). For determiners and quantifiers, antiveridicality is not relevant, she argues, since no determiners or quantifiers require that their NP argument must be empty. For example, *No students talked* does not entail that there were no students, only that there were no students who talked (Giannakidou 1998:122).

Another important ingredient of Giannakidou's model is the concept of *indirect licensing*. A polarity sensitive element is indirectly licensed if it appears in a context that does not contain any element that in itself induces nonveridicality, but which nevertheless allows nonveridical or even antiveridical implicatures to be inferred (Giannakidou 1998:146ff.). For example, building on Sadock (1971, 1974) Giannakidou proposes

that rhetorical questions are semantically equivalent to assertions of the opposite polarity. Hence, the positive rhetorical question in (101a) (her example (127b), p. 147) equals the negative assertion in (101b) (her example (128b), p. 147):

- (101)a. Who gives a damn about what you think?  
 b. Nobody gives a damn about what you think.

From this point of view, a positive rhetorical question gives rise to antiveridical inferences, and because of this, it will be able to license certain polarity sensitive elements.

The abovementioned properties form the basis of Giannakidou’s classification of polarity sensitive elements. In her system, *weak* polarity sensitive elements are licensed in any context that is directly or indirectly nonveridical. *Strong* polarity sensitive elements are licensed in contexts that are directly or indirectly antiveridical, whereas *superstrong* polarity sensitive elements are only licensed in contexts that are directly antiveridical (Giannakidou 1998:156). This is summarised in table 3.

<i>Type</i>	Licensed by	DIRECTLY	INDIRECTLY
Weak	nonveridicality	yes	yes
Strong	antiveridicality	yes	yes
Superstrong	antiveridicality	yes	no

Table 3: Giannakidou’s classification of polarity items (Giannakidou 1998:156)

If we now turn to our test battery again, we see that *aldri* ‘never’ and *på ingen måte* ‘in no way’ are anti-veridical operators, and consequently, it is as expected that these expressions should license all the NPIs in our test set, modulo the pragmatic effects that render *på ingen måte* less acceptable with idiomatic NPIs. More telling is the fact that polarity questions with “store jenta”-constructions tend to have a rhetorical flavour. While plain polarity questions are nonveridical, rhetorical questions are indirectly antiveridical, as noted above. Hence, if an NPI pushes a question towards a rhetorical interpretation, this suggests that the NPI is strong — it requires an antiveridical context rather than one that is merely nonveridical. If this reasoning is correct, it seems that “store jenta”-constructions are strong NPIs in Giannakidou’s system.



This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that “store jenta”-constructions are not licensed by *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’, which is at best nonveridical; it is clearly not antiveridical.

Giannakidou’s approach also appears to give the right predictions concerning “store jenta”-constructions in conditional clauses. According to Giannakidou (1998:131), factive conditionals are nonveridical by virtue of being nonassertive. It follows that “store jenta”-constructions, if they really are strong NPIs according to Giannakidou’s classification, should not be licensed by factive conditionals. This is in accordance with the facts.

Counterfactual conditionals, by contrast, are claimed to give rise to antiveridical inferences in their antecedents (Giannakidou 1998:148), and if this is right, counterfactual conditionals should license “store jenta”-constructions. But unfortunately for Giannakidou, they don’t — at least not generally, although there appears to be some variation:

(102) \* Viss ho hadde vori store jenta, så kunne ho fått bli med.  
 if she had been big girl.DEF so could she got come with  
 ‘If she had been a big girl, she could have come along.’

(103) ?\* Viss dei hadde gått lange turen, så hadde vi hørt det.  
 if they had walked long trip.DEF so had we heard it  
 ‘If they had walked a long distance, we would have heard.’

(104) ? Viss dei hadde hatt store sjansane, så ville eg visst det.  
 if they had had big chances.DEF so would I known it  
 ‘If they had had any big chances, I would have known.’

As for *tvile på* ‘doubt’, it seems at first glance to be only nonveridical too, not antiveridical. Its ability to license “store jenta”-constructions would then speak against the assumption that “store jenta”-constructions are strong NPIs. It is conceivable, though, that *tvile på* can come with antiveridical inferences, which enable this verb to license

strong NPIs. If this is correct, the claim that “store jenta”-constructions are strong NPIs can be maintained.

But another problem remains that cannot easily be explained away. In Giannakidou’s model, determiners and quantifiers are never antiveridical; as noted above, they can only be nonveridical. Hence, the fact that “store jenta”-constructions are licensed by *ingen av dei* ‘none of them’ ought to mean that “store jenta”-constructions are weak NPIs. But then these constructions should accept all the licensors in our test set, including *nesten ingen* ‘almost nobody’. So we see that Giannakidou’s approach leads to contradictions when it is applied to “store jenta”-constructions.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have seen that the Norwegian “store jenta”-construction is a templatic NPI, which means that the choice of lexical items to build it from is free within certain limits. It is also exceptional among Norwegian nominal phrases in having a suffixed definiteness marker on the noun while a preposed definiteness marker may not appear, despite the obligatory presence of a prenominal modifier. I have proposed that the reason why there is no preposed definiteness marker is that the D-projection is missing. Without a D head, the definiteness feature found in lower projections does not make the phrase referential. But the definiteness feature conflicts with the absence of D, and the consequence is that the phrase has a very limited distribution. In other words, the absence of D and the presence of a definiteness feature cause the phrase to be an NPI.

If we apply the classification of NPIs proposed by Israel (2001), “store jenta”-constructions are attenuating NPIs representing a high scalar value. That is, they belong to the same class as *much* and *all that*. And like these quantificational NPIs, “store jenta”-constructions are regularly used in understatement, in effect expressing a low scalar value.

As for their external syntax, “store jenta”-constructions can be predicates, adverbials and objects. Some of them can even be subjects, as long as they are c-commanded by a licensor in their base position, whereas others are not acceptable in positions that clearly are subject positions.

Finally, the licensing requirements of “store jenta”-constructions were considered in the light of the models proposed by Progovac (1994), van der Wouden (1997) and

Giannakidou (1998), and it appeared that neither of these models could give a satisfactory account of all the Norwegian NPIs in our test set, consisting of *noe som helst* ‘anything at all’ plus two idiomatic minimisers and three “store jenta”-constructions.

Progovac’s proposal runs into problems with the idiomatic NPIs and with “store jenta”-constructions, since NPIs of both types have properties that are contradictory in her model. Van der Wouden’s model fares somewhat better, but offers no real explanation for the licensing properties of verbs, questions and conditionals. Licensing of NPIs in questions and conditionals fall out logically in Giannakidou’s model, but there are nevertheless problems when the model is confronted with “store jenta”-constructions. The model can explain why “store jenta”-constructions trigger a negatively biased reading when they appear in questions (rhetorical questions, unlike truly information-seeking questions, are arguably anti-veridical), but their inability to be licensed in counterfactual conditionals, and the variation that we see when “store jenta”-constructions combine with negative nominal phrases, are unexpected.

The behaviour of “store jenta”-constructions thus suggests that existing models for NPI-licensing need to be revised. Alternatively, a completely new theory will have to be developed.

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