

# ***ELLERHUR* and other Yes/No-question operator candidates in Swedish\***

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**Abstract.** Our point of departure is a new use of the question tag *eller hur* (or how) ‘isn’t it?’ in Swedish:

- (i) *Eller hur ska vi åka till Italien i sommar?*  
*or how shall we go to Italy in summer*  
‘We will go to Italy this summer, won’t we?’

We argue that *eller hur* used in this way is an overt Yes/No-question operator, and that it patterns with *visst* and *nog*, which we propose are two other Yes/No-question operators in Swedish.

We also discuss *eller hur* that combines with a *that*-clause, a configuration that yields a sentence that in most cases is construed as an ironic statement. We argue that this instance of *eller hur* is not a question operator, but what we term a non-verbal matrix, and furthermore that *eller hur*, followed by a *that*-clause, patterns with other non-verbal matrices with a similar meaning, such as *visst* ‘sure’ and *säkert* ‘sure’.

## **1 Introduction**

The default question tag in Swedish is *eller hur* (or how). Just like its English counterpart *isn’t it*, *eller hur* is used in contexts where the speaker expects the listener to agree with the statement just made. Consider (1) for an example:

- (1) *Filmen var bra, eller hur?*  
*film.the was good, or how*  
‘The film was good, wasn’t it?’

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A new way of using *eller hur* has developed, especially among children and youngsters. *Eller hur* can nowadays be used in a clause initial position, which is illustrated in (2). In what follows we will annotate *eller hur* in its new use as *ELLERHUR*.

- (2) ELLERHUR var filmen bra?  
*ELLERHUR was film.the good*  
 'The film was good, wasn't it?'

As (2) shows, *ELLERHUR* precedes the finite verb, which indicates that it is a fully integrated part of the clause; hence we gather that its syntactic status differs from *eller hur* in examples such as (1); as a tag question *eller hur* is most reasonably right dislocated.<sup>1</sup>

In its new use, *ELLERHUR* may also precede a *that*-clause.

- (3) ELLERHUR att filmen var bra.  
*ELLERHUR that film.the was good*

As will be elaborated in more detail in section 3, the meaning of sentences such as (3) depends on the context; typically the sentences convey an ironic meaning.<sup>2</sup>

Our paper has several purposes: Y/N-question operators in Swedish is the topic of section 2. First of all we present an analysis of the new *ELLERHUR* + finite verb. In short, we argue that *ELLERHUR* in examples such as (2) is a Y/N-question

<sup>1</sup> We take no definite stand as how to right dislocation should be analysed syntactically, but assume that right dislocated elements are located in a separate syntactic domain, associated with the preceding clause semantically.

<sup>2</sup> Yet another recently developed use of *ELLERHUR* should be mentioned. Consider (i).

- (i) A: Svenskläraren är typ jordens tråkigaste människa.  
*Swedish teacher.the is like earth.the's most.boring person*  
 'The Swedish teacher is like the most boring person on earth'  
 B: Eller hur!  
*or how*  
 'I agree!'

In the example above, *ELLERHUR* is used as an answer. By uttering *ELLERHUR*, speaker B signals that he or she agrees with the statement made by speaker A. There is most probably a connection between all the new uses of *ELLERHUR*, but the nature of this relation will not be explored in this paper.

operator. Secondly, we argue that Swedish has more Y/N-question operators, in particular *visst* and *nog*, and that *ELLERHUR* patterns with these operators. In section 3 we argue that *ELLERHUR* immediately preceding a *that*-clause, as in (3), is an example of what we call a non-verbal matrix. In this latter use *ELLERHUR* does not have any question operator properties. Section 4 contains a short summary.

## 2 Y/N-question operators in Swedish

### 2.1 *ELLERHUR* in V2-constructions, a recently emerged Y/N-question operator

As pointed out in the introduction, *ELLERHUR* in its new use may precede the finite verb in main clauses. Consider (4), which is a repetition of (2) above.

- (4) *ELLERHUR* var filmen bra?  
*ELLERHUR* was film.the good  
 'The film was good, wasn't it?'

The fact that *ELLERHUR* in (4) triggers V2 shows beyond doubt that it is an integrated part of the clause, on a par with fronted objects or adverbials, elements that all trigger V2. Compare (4) to the examples in (5).

- (5)a Filmens tänkte vi se.  
*film.the thought we see*  
 'We planned to see the film.'
- b Idag tänkte vi se film.  
*today thought we see film*  
 'We planned to see a film today.'
- c Förmodligen tänker de se film.  
*probably think they see film*  
 'They'll probably see a film.'

We assume that tag questions, such as *isn't it* in English and *eller hur* in Swedish, are not integrated syntactically into the preceding “host clause”. Thus, a sentence such as (1) consists of a statement, *Filmen var bra* ‘The film was good’, followed by a question with the intended meaning ‘Don’t you agree that the film was good?’. The two syntactic constituents make up one utterance. The function of a tag question is to ask the listener for support. This is also the meaning that *ELLERHUR* in its new sentence initial position conveys. What is important is that *ELLERHUR* is an integrated part of the clause. There is thus just one single CP in (4), a Y/N-question, and the clause-initial element, *ELLERHUR*, is what makes the constituent a question.

The expected answer to (4) is “Yes, it was.”, “Yes, the film was fantastic” or alike. The fact that *ELLERHUR* turns the sentence into a Y/N-question suggests that *ELLERHUR* in a clause initial position is a question operator, more specifically an overt instance of the null question operator Q that Katz & Postal (1964) have postulated for English.<sup>3</sup> This conclusion might come as somewhat surprising; to the best of our knowledge overt Y/N-question operators have not been suggested for Swedish previously. However, such operators are quite frequent in other languages. For instance, Platzack (2010: 58) argues that Old Icelandic *hvert* is an operator of this kind, see (6a), and Radford (1988:296) shows that Y/N-question operators are found in Yiddish, Polish, Estonian, see (6b–d):

- (6)a Hvert má G. heyra mál mitt? (Old Icelandic)  
*OP may G. hear speech my*  
 ‘May G hear my speech now?’
- b Tsi hot er geleient dos bux? (Yiddish)  
*OP has he read DET book*  
 ‘Has he read the book.’
- c Czy zamykacie okna? (Polish)  
*OP you.close windows*  
 ‘Do you close the windows?’

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<sup>3</sup> The idea that Swedish has null Yes/No-question operators of the type assumed for English are discussed for instance in Platzack (1998) and (2010), as well as in Waldmann (2008, 39).

- d Kas suitsetate? (Estonian)  
*OP you.smoke*  
 'Do you smoke?'
- e Tsi hot er geleient dos bux? (Yiddish)  
*OP has he read DET book*  
 'Has he read the book.'

Other languages with overt Y/N-questions operators are Bulgarian and Japanese (see Platzack 2010, 58). Also Latin appears to have overt Y/N-question operators. Consider (7), which shows examples with *-ne*, *nonne*, and *num*.

- (7)a Vides-ne?  
*See.you-OP*  
 'Do you see?'
- b Nonne vides?  
*OP see.you*  
 'Don't you see?'
- c Num vides?  
*OP see.you*  
 'Do you really see?'

The particle *nonne* seems to be the negative correspondent to *-ne*; it conveys an expectation for a negative answer, whereas *-ne* conveys an expectation for a positive answer. However, the Latin question particle that seems to correspond most closely to *ELLERHUR* is *an*:

- (8) Hostes facile vincemus. An non pares iis sumus?  
*Enemies easily overcome.2PL OP not equal to.them be.2PL*  
 'We shall beat the enemies easily. Or, aren't we equally good?'

The particle *an*, in our view a Y/N-question operator, conveys a strong expectation for a positive answer.

The examples in (6)–(8) show that overt Y/N-question operators are found in closely as well as not so closely related languages; hence it not so strange that we find them in Swedish too.

## 2.2 Other Y/N- question operator candidates in Swedish

An interesting question is why *ELLERHUR* has become a Y/N-question operator in Swedish – as pointed out above this seems to be a fairly recent development. A clue to an answer is suggested in an article by the Swedish columnist Ingemar Unge (2009).<sup>4</sup> Unge comments on the new use of *ELLERHUR*, and suggests that children make an analogy between the word *visst*. From a functional point of view the "old" use of *eller hur*, i.e. as a tag question, and *visst* in sentence initial position yields the same meaning; hence, from a functional point of view, (9a) and (9b) are equivalents.

(9)a    Filmen    var    bra,    eller    hur?  
           *film.the    was    good,    ELLERHUR*  
           'The film was good, wasn't it?'

      b    Visst    var    filmen    bra?  
           *VISST    was    film.the    good*  
           'The film was good, wasn't it?'

We find it plausible that the tag *eller hur* has been reanalysed as an operator, Q-*ELLERHUR* due to the functional similarity between *visst* and *eller hur*. However, a more precise description of a possible grammaticalization process is out of the scope of this paper.

If we take a closer look at (9b), we find that it in fact provides evidence for at least one more Y/N-question operator in Swedish, namely *visst*. *Visst* in the initial position of a sentence such as (9b) unambiguously triggers inversion and yields a question interpretation. On a par with *ELLERHUR* it also conveys a strong expectation that the listener will agree with the speaker; the expected answer is "Yes, it was" or something similar.

If we continue our investigation we find yet another candidate for a Y/N-question operator, namely *nog*:

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<sup>4</sup> See also Strömquist (2008).

- (10) *Nog var filmen bra?*  
*NOG was film.the good*  
 'Wasn't the film good?'

Examples such as (10) show that *nog* is a Y/N-question operator too, or at least that it can be used in this way. The examples in (9b) and (10) do not need any particular linguistic context, neither before nor after in order to be felicitous.

So far we have argued that there are three Y/N-question operators in Swedish: *ELLERHUR*, *visst*, and *nog*. In addition to being Y/N-question operators, *ELLERHUR* and *visst* seem to convey about the same degree of expectation that the listener will agree with the speaker.<sup>5</sup> *Nog* conveys a similar type of expectance, but to a lesser degree than the other two.

A factor that may confuse the picture is that *visst* and *nog* may have other meanings too, in particular when they show up in the canonical sentence adverbial position in the middle field:<sup>6</sup>

- (11)a *Filmen var visst bra.*  
*film.the was VISST good*  
 'I heard that the film was good.'
- b *Filmen var nog bra.*  
*salmon.the was NOG good*  
 'The film was probably good.'

It is possible that the meaning of *visst* and *nog* as Y/N-question operators are related to the meaning of *visst* and *nog* in the middle field, but for the sake of exposition it is probably instructive to think of them as different lexemes:  $VISST_{OP}$  and  $VISST_{ADVL}$  as well as  $NOG_{OP}$  and  $NOG_{ADVL}$ . The meaning of  $VISST_{ADVL}$  in (11a) conveys a report modality 'from what I have heard', whereas  $NOG_{ADVL}$  in

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<sup>5</sup> The questions that are formed with the Y/N-question operator *ELLERHUR* are not purely information seeking, but "tendentious", in the sense that they convey an expectation for a particular answer. However, this is not exclusive to *ELLERHUR*-questions, also Y/N-question with a null Y/N-question operator (assuming Postal & Katz 1964 analysis of such operators) may be tendentious in the same way. (Thanks to Valeria Molnár for clarifying this.)

<sup>6</sup> See Petersson (2008) for an extensive discussion of the meanings of *inte* 'not', *visst*, and *nog* in different positions in the clause.

(11b) conveys a certain amount of uncertainty, corresponding to English 'probably'.

In addition, sentences such as (12a) and (12b) with a sentence-initial *visst* and *nog* can acquire a concessive reading when followed by a *but*-sentence:

(12)a *Visst* var laxen god, men räkorna var godare.  
*VISST* was salmon.the good, but shrimps.the were better  
 'The salmon was surely good, but the shrimps were better.'

b *Nog* var laxen god, men räkorna var godare.  
*NOG* was salmon.the good, but shrimps.the were better  
 'The salmon was surely good, but the shrimps were better.'

Drawing on Petersson (2008), we suggest that *visst* in (12a) is another lexeme, more specifically a concessive adverbial; in a sentence initial position *visst* can be exchanged for the concessive adverbial *visserligen*. The same applies to *nog* in (12b). The meaning of (13) is about the same as that of (12a) and (12b).

(13) *Visserligen* var laxen god, men räkorna var godare  
*VISSERLIGEN* was salmon.the good, but shrimps.the were better  
 'The salmon was good, but the shrimps were better.'

We will indicate this use of *visst* and *nog* with a subscript: *visst*<sub>VISSERLIGEN</sub> and *nog*<sub>VISSERLIGEN</sub>.<sup>7 8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Yet another confusing fact is that *visst*<sub>VISSERLIGEN</sub> may be used independently.

(i) *Visst*, jag har inte problem med det.  
*VISST*<sub>visserligen</sub> I have not problem with it'  
 'Sure, I don't have any problems with that.'

Strangely enough *visserligen* cannot be used in this way:

(ii) \**Visserligen*, jag har inte problem med det.  
*VISSERLIGEN* I have not problem with that

As the translation indicates, the English equivalent to *visst* in (i) is 'sure'.

Yet another use of *visst*, is as a stressed adverbial in the middle field:

(iii) Jag har *VISST* betalat!  
 I have *VISST* payed  
 'You're wrong; I have indeed payed!'

As the translation of (iii) shows this use of *VISST* implies that the speaker opposes the listener.



According to the proposed analysis, *visst* and *nog* in (11) are not Y/N-question operators, even though examples such as (11a) and (11b) may pragmatically be construed as Y/N-questions. However, when this happens, it is due to pragmatics, not to the presence of any syntactic operator. For this reason *visst* and *nog* in (11) are best viewed as ordinary sentence adverbials. When carrying a Y/N-question operator function, *visst* and *nog* have to be in Spec CP – the designated position for sentence type operators. This also explains why the Y/N-question operator *ELLERHUR* cannot appear in the middle field, the default location for sentence adverbials.

(14) Laxen var visst/nog/\*ELLERHUR god.

There are at least four more candidates for Y/N-question operators in Swedish, *kanske* 'maybe', the negation *inte* 'not', *månne* 'maybe' and *männtro* 'maybe'.<sup>9</sup> We discuss these candidates in turn.

From a diachronic perspective *kanske* 'maybe' is presumably derived from the verbs *kan* 'can' and *ske* 'happen'. As (15) shows, *kanske* may show up clause initially as well as in the middle field, (There are a number of other possible positions for *kanske*, which will not be considered here.)

(15)a Kanske var hon trött.  
*maybe was she tired*  
 'Maybe she was tired.'

b Han hade kanske varit i London.  
*he had maybe been in London*  
 'Maybe he had been in London.'

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The uses of *visst* exemplified in (i) and (iii) are most probably related to each other as well as to other uses of *visst*, but since this connection has no direct bearing on our study, we will not pursue any further investigations.

<sup>8</sup> The issue is further complicated by the fact that *visserligen* may show up in the middle field – though conveying the same concessive meaning as clause-initial *visserligen*:

(i) Laxen var visserligen god, men räkorna var godare.  
*salmon.the was VISSERLIGEN good, but shrimps.the were better*

An elaborate analysis of *visserligen* in (i) is not central to the present study.

<sup>9</sup> Since there are no equivalents to *månne* and *männtro* in English, no English glossing will be given.

The example in (15a) is not a Y/N-question, which indicates that *kanske* is not an operator here. However, by virtue of the modal character of *kanske* 'maybe' – it conveys uncertainty –, both sentence initially *kanske* and *kanske* in the middle field have a strong tendency to trigger a question interpretation. However, we claim that this is due to pragmatic factors, and that *kanske* is not a Y/N-question operator here.

The negation *inte* 'not' may occur sentence initially too:

- (16) *Inte ska vi ha lax till lunch.*  
*not shall we have salmon for lunch*  
 'We shouldn't have salmon for lunch, should we?'

Just like sentences with *kanske* + finite verb (c.f. (15a)), sentences with *inte* 'not' in a sentence-initial position (followed by the finite verb) display a quite strong tendency to be construed as questions. However, as opposed to sentences with sentence-initial *ELLERHUR* + finite verb, such sentences may have a number of other pragmatic functions too, for instance what we could characterize as a "rhetoric or overpolite question":

- (17) *Inte ska jag sitta på hedersplatsen!*  
*not shall I sit on honorseat.the*  
 'I shouldn't sit on the honor seat, should I?'

To conclude, we argue that *inte* 'not' in examples such as (16) and (17) is not a question operator. Instead, it is a sentence adverbial, where the meaning component that we tentatively term *IRREALIS* may promote a question interpretation pragmatically. However, the same pragmatic function may be conveyed by *inte* 'not' in the middle field, which is the canonical position for sentence adverbials:

- (18) *Ni vill inte ha lite kaffe?*  
*you want not have some coffee*  
 'You don't want some coffee, do you?'

*Månne* is another Y/N-question operator candidate. The canonical position for *månne* is clause-finally, or the middle field. For this reason, Teleman & al. (1999)

classify *månne* as a sentence adverbial.<sup>10</sup> Teleman & al. point out, though, that *månne* (though somewhat marginally) may occur sentence-initially too:

- (19) Månne är det arbetarrörelsen, som hon är fixerad till?  
*MÅNNE is it labor movement.the, which she is attached to?*  
 ‘Maybe it’s the labor movement that she is attached to?’

(Teleman & al (1999 4, 743)).

According to Teleman & al. (1999) (19) is a declarative clause. We need to emphasize that examples such as (19) are infrequent in modern Swedish; the use of *månne* is in many ways obsolete.

Teleman & al. (1999) also point out that *månne* is more frequently used in the middle field:

- (20) Är det månne arbetarrörelsen som hon är fixerad till?

Examples such as (20) show that it is difficult to make a general statement about the operator status of *månne* in Swedish. One possibility could be that the Y/N-question operator status of *månne* is unclear in Swedish, another that some speakers have two lexical items in their mental grammar: *månne*<sub>OPERATOR</sub> and *månne*<sub>ADVL</sub>, whereas others have only *månne*<sub>ADVL</sub>. (Many speakers, especially young people, probably lack *månne* altogether in their mental lexicon.) A third answer would be to take a diachronic point of view and say that *månne*<sub>OPERATOR</sub> is on its way out of the language. We do not take any definite stand as to which of the possible descriptions is most adequate.

The fourth candidate for a Y/N-question operator is *månntro*. It seems that *månntro* has the same properties as *månne*, described above. Occasional examples with *månntro* + finite verb can be found on the Internet:

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<sup>10</sup> The corresponding particle in Danish is *mon*. Ertshik-Shir claims that *mon* + finite verb is ungrammatical in Danish (Ertshik-Shir 2010). However, *mon* may combine with a *that*-clause in Danish, which is a parallel to Swedish *månne* as a non-verbal matrix. See section 3 for more discussion.

- (21) Månntro är fröken hemma i Värnamo?  
 MÅNNTRO is miss home in Värnamo  
 'Do you maybe come from Värnamo, miss?'

The example in (21) is one of the few examples of *månntro* + finite verb found on Google. It is a quote from a folk song, which is probably not coincidental; *månntro* in this use is obsolete. Our conclusion is that *månntro* has the same operator status as argued for *månne* above, in other words that it is difficult to establish if it is a Y/N-question operator or not; however, it might be that *månntro* is an operator in the mental lexicon of some speakers.

The discussion in this section shows that it can be difficult to tease apart cases with a Y/N-question operator in a clause initial position from sentences with another element, primarily a sentence adverbial in this position, which pragmatically may evoke a question interpretation. Nevertheless we have tried to make a distinction; hence, according to the proposed analysis *ELLERHUR*, *visst* and *nog* are Y/N-question operators when followed by the finite verb, *kanske* and *inte* do not have such operator status, and *månne* and *månntro* have an unclear status. What confuses the picture is that there are other, homonymous instances of *visst* and *nog*. From a diachronic point of view the operator status of *ELLERHUR* is due to a fairly recent language development. In view of this it might be the case that *kanske* and *inte* are in the progress of developing towards an operator status, or rather that *kanske* 'maybe' and *inte* 'not' will split into *kanske*<sub>OP</sub> and *kanske*<sub>ADVL</sub> as well as *inte*<sub>OP</sub> and *inte*<sub>ADVL</sub>.

### **3 *ELLERHUR* + *that*-clause – an example of a non-verbal matrix**

The purpose of this section is to show that *ELLERHUR* + *att*-sentences are best analysed as non-verbal matrices, i.e. elements that show up in ForceP, encoding illocutionary force without being verbs. We start out by discussing *ELLERHUR* in this configuration, and continue to other instances of non-verbal matrices, such as *visst* 'sure' and *säkert* 'sure', which parallel with *ELLERHUR*.

A sentence initial *ELLERHUR* is found also in constructions where *ELLERHUR* is immediately followed by a *that*-clause (henceforth we will refer to such constructions as *ELLERHUR att*-sentences). Such sentences are different from the *ELLERHUR*-sentences discussed in section 2, where *ELLERHUR* is analyzed as a Y/N-question operator. We argue that *ELLERHUR att*-sentences are declaratives, not questions; hence *ELLER HUR* is not a Y/N-question operator in these sentences.

Depending on the context in which they occur, *ELLERHUR att*-sentences have two basic uses. In the first use the speaker holds the propositional content of the *att*-clause to be true and expects the hearer to confirm this. In the second use the speaker expresses his or her disbelief regarding the propositional content of the *att*-clause. We refer to the first use as “the sincere reading” and to the latter as “the ironic reading”. (22) shows an authentic example of an *ELLERHUR att*-sentence with the sincere reading.

(22)A. Eller hur att photoshop är mammas gata för dig?  
*ELLERHUR that photoshop is mother's street for you*

B I vissa perioder sitter jag i Photoshop mer än jag sover,  
*in some periods sit I in Photoshop more than I sleep*

det säger nog en hel del  
*that says probably a whole part*

A 'Photoshop is right up your alley, isn't it?'

B 'In some periods, I spend more time working with Photoshop than I do sleeping, that probably says a lot.'

Although *ELLERHUR att*-sentences with a sincere reading seem to be quite common, the ironic reading, as exemplified in (23) below, appears to be much more frequent.

(23) Sedan Aleksander Lukasjenko valdes till president 1994 har  
*since A. L. was.elected to president1994 has*

landet gått från skakig demokrati till en ren  
*country.the gone from shaky democracy to a pure*

diktatur. I söndagens val fick han 82,6 procent av ,  
*dictatorship. in Sunday's election got he 82.6 percent of*

rösterna enligt de preliminära resultaten  
*votes.the according.to the preliminary results*

från valkommissionen.  
*from referendum.committee*

– Eller hur att han fick ?!  
*ELLERHUR that he got*

'Since Aleksander Lukasjenko was elected president in 1994, the country has gone from a shaky democracy to a pure dictatorship. In the elections last Sunday, he received 82.6 percent of the votes, according to the preliminary results from the elections committee.

– Sure he did/Yeah, right!'

(23) is an excerpt from a political blog. The author comments on an election held in Belarus. She first cites the preliminary results from the elections committee and then comments on them with the *ELLERHUR att*-sentence, dismissing them as unreliable. The comment consists of *ELLERHUR* followed by an (elliptic) *att*-clause. The propositional content of the *att*-clause is identical to that of the preceding declarative sentence. However, it is quite clear that the author does not consider this proposition to be true. Instead, by using the sentence introduced by *ELLERHUR*, she expresses her strong disbelief. The meaning of *ELLERHUR att*-sentences conveying the ironic reading can be formalized as “it is not the case that p.”<sup>11</sup>

With the ironic reading, the question flavour is gone, which indicates that *ELLERHUR att*-sentences are not questions, but declaratives. It is true that sincere *ELLERHUR att*-sentences are easily construed as questions, which could be taken

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<sup>11</sup> It should be mentioned that *visst att* can be used in more or less the same way as the ironic *ELLERHUR att*.

to indicate that *ELLERHUR* might be a Y/N-question operator in these cases. However, since we want to present a unified account of *ELLERHUR att*-sentences, we propose that *ELLERHUR* in *ELLERHUR att*-sentences is not a Y/N-question operator. We argue instead that *ELLERHUR* followed by a *that*-clause is best analyzed as a *non-verbal matrix*. However, before elaborating on this idea we will present the basic theoretical outset of our analysis.

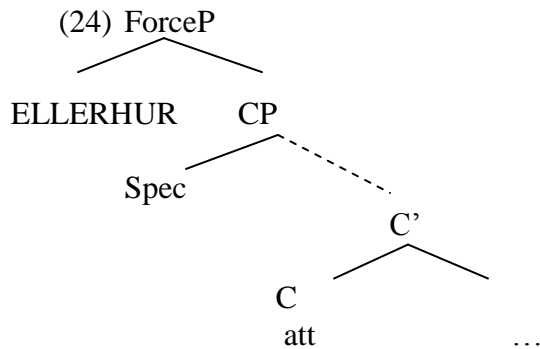
Following a widely spread view, we assume that the main clause/subordinate clause asymmetry in Swedish is related to V-to-C movement. We assume that the finite verb in a Swedish main clause moves from V to C°, whereas C°, in a subordinate clause, is occupied by a complementizer. The finite verb of a subordinate clause stays *in situ*, (cf. among others, den Besten, 1983; Holmberg and Platzack, 1995; Vikner, 1995). Drawing on Rizzi (1997), we also assume that there is a close correlation between semantic interpretation and syntactic structure, which can be described and explained in a split CP-model, where illocutionary force and clause type are coded in ForceP. In Swedish, illocutionary force is typically associated with the finite verb having moved to Force°. We assume that only the highest available ForceP in a given syntactic structure, typically the ForceP of the main clause, can be specified for an independent illocutionary force. The role of a complementizer is to anchor a CP in a superordinate structure. In Swedish, Force° in a subordinate clause, is typically occupied by a complementizer; consequently, the clause lacks an independent speech act value. In main clauses the verb has undergone V-to-Force movement, which renders the clause an independent speech act value.

Let us now return to the *ELLERHUR att*-sentences. It is clear that these sentences are complete, independent, and well formed utterances, which means that they express speech acts on their own. More specifically, they are declaratives, which means that they typically function as statements or questions. Given our assumption that illocutionary force is coded in ForceP, we conclude that *ELLERHUR att*-sentences contain a Force projection. The question is where and how the illocutionary force of an *ELLERHUR att*-sentence is coded.

An *ELLERHUR att*-sentence consists of two parts: the expression *ELLERHUR* and an *att*-clause. Given our basic theoretical assumptions, the possibility that the

illocutionary force of an *ELLERHUR att*-sentence is coded in the *att*-clause can quite easily be ruled out. The *att*-clause is introduced by the complementizer *att*, which presumably occupies Force<sup>o</sup>. Since we assume, that the role of a complementizer is to anchor a subordinate CP in a superordinate, matrix CP and also that only the highest CP of a clause structure can carry an independent specification for illocutionary force, we conclude that the *att*-clause does not carry the illocutionary force. This conclusion is also consistent with the observation that an *att*-clause in general does not express a speech act.<sup>12</sup>

Since we have ruled out the possibility that the illocutionary force of an *ELLERHUR att*-sentence is coded syntactically in the *att*-clause, we conclude that *ELLERHUR* must be the element that carries the illocutionary force. *ELLERHUR* is not verbal; it is what we term a non-verbal matrix, to which the *att*-clause is subordinated. As illustrated in (24), *ELLERHUR* is located in the topmost ForceP.<sup>13</sup>



If our analysis is on the right track and *ELLERHUR* is a non-verbal matrix, *ELLERHUR att*-sentences deviate considerably from the prototypical pattern of

<sup>12</sup> It should be pointed out that an *att*-clause, in certain contexts, independently can express speech acts in Swedish. An example is given in (i).

(i) Att han inte skäms!  
*that he not is.ashamed*  
 'He should be ashamed of himself!'

However, independent *att*-clauses, such as that in (i), are used to express exclamative speech acts. An *att*-clause can not express a declarative speech act on its own.

<sup>13</sup> According to standard assumptions a complementizer occupies the head of Force. It might be the case that this holds for non-verbal matrix elements such as *ELLERHUR* too, but we will leave the question open. In any case, we assume that the presence of *ELLERHUR* (as well as other non-verbal matrix elements, see below) in ForceP excludes the presence of other elements encoding illocutionary force in the ForceP.



Swedish main clauses where illocutionary force is coded by the finite verb moving from V to Force°. For this reason, the idea of a non verbal matrix may come across as somewhat odd. In recent literature, however, similar analyses have been suggested for other constructions in Swedish. Our analysis of *ELLERHUR att*-sentences resembles that of Julien (2009), who discusses *plus(s)-at(t)*-clauses and related constructions in Mainland Scandinavian. (25) is one of the examples discussed by Julien.

(25) Finns en del spelare som kan bli riktigt grymma i framtiden,  
*are a few players that can become really wicked in future.the*

plus att de har en bra tränare också  
*plus that they have a good trainer too*

'There are a few players that can become really good in the future, and they have a good coach too.'

In short, Julien argues that *plus att de har en bra tränare också* should be analysed as a declarative clause, consisting of a regular subordinate clause, *att de har en bra tränare också*, which is subordinated to *plus*, which is what she terms a “minimal matrix” (Julien, 2009, 132).

The idea of a non-finite, or minimal, matrix has also been suggested for exclamatives, such as (26).

(26) Fan att du aldrig lär dig!  
*damn that you never learn REFL.*

'Why don't you ever learn!'

The *att*-clause in (26) looks just like any other subordinate clause. However, it is often considered to be an independent main clause since it expresses a speech act and doesn't need a matrix (the interjection *fan* can be left out). According to Magnusson (2007) and Stroh-Wollin (2008), however, these exclamative clauses are subordinated. They suggest that the interjection *fan* in an exclamative such as (27) is an element that occupies ForceP (Magnusson) or a non finite matrix (Stroh-Wollin), and that this element takes the *att*-clause as its complement.

The *plus(s)-at(t)* sentences discussed by Julien (2009) and the exclamative clauses discussed by Magnusson (2007) and Stroh-Wollin (2008) are very similar to *ELLERHUR-att* sentences, discussed in this paper. Other non-verbal matrix candidates are *visst* and *säkert* ‘sure’:

(27)a Visst att du är Bill Gates.  
*VISST that you are Bill Gates*  
 ‘Sure you’re Bill Gates.’

b Säkert att du är Bill Gates.  
*sure that you are Bill Gates*  
 ‘Sure you’re Bill Gates.’

Both (27a) and (27b) typically convey irony.

To conclude: We propose that *ELLERHUR* in *ELLERHUR att*-sentences is a non-verbal matrix, located in the topmost Force projection. *ELLERHUR* patterns with *visst* ‘sure’ and *säkert* ‘sure’, which may be used in the same way.

## 4 Summary

In our paper we discuss *ELLERHUR* and other Y/N-question candidates in Swedish, as well as *ELLERHUR* and similar elements followed by a *that*-clause.

We have suggested that *ELLERHUR*, when followed by the finite verb, is a Y/N-question operator. It turns the sentence into a question with a strong expectation that the listener will agree with the speaker. This use of *ELLERHUR* is very similar to *VISST* and *NOG*, which also turn the sentence into a question. Hence, we argue that *VISST* and *NOG* are Y/N-question operators too. It is possible that *MÅNNE* and *MÅNNTRO* are Y/N-question operators of the same type. However, they are both obsolete, and it is difficult to establish their status in modern Swedish.

We have also argued that *ELLERHUR*, when followed by a *that*-clause, is not an operator, but a non-verbal matrix, on a par with elements such as *visst* ‘sure’ and *säkert* ‘sure’, followed by a *that*-clause. The elements in question are located in the topmost Force-projection, hence they determine the illocutionary Force of the

whole projection. Elements such as *ELLERHUR*, *visst*, and *säkert* + *that*-clauses often acquire a question interpretation, but as opposed to *ELLERHUR/VISST/NOG* + finite verb, this interpretation is not obligatory. For this reason we assume that *ELLERHUR*, *visst*, and *säkert* are not question operators in this configuration, but adverbials. The bias towards a question interpretation for such sentences is due to pragmatic factors, probably factors of the same kind as those responsible for the tendency for *kanske*- and *inte*-sentences to be interpreted pragmatically as questions.

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