

# “Dear me, we’re in trouble because the sign has split up in two.” On the pronunciation and function of the Danish adverb *altså*

CHRISTOPHE ZERAKITSKY VIES & JAN HEEGÅRD PETERSEN

In Danish dictionaries, the word *altså* ‘thus, then, obviously, therefore’ is presented as a single lexeme with a large degree of polysemy. *Altså* has an adverbial and an interjectional usage, and both of these have several sub-meanings. In the DanPASS corpus of contemporary spoken Danish, *altså*’s pronunciation is rendered as very distinct [’al’sʌ] to strongly reduced [a]. In this article, we suggest a measure for phonetic reduction, an ‘expansion hierarchy’, and we investigate whether the variation in the pronunciation of *altså* correlates with its syntactic function. The results a grouping of the manifestations of *altså*’s in two clusters, a clause-external, and a clause-internal. The clause-external use is interjectional, and its correlating pronunciations are clearly reduced, i.e., consisting of few segments. The clause-internal use encompasses sentence adverbs and modal particles (Da. *dialogiske partikler*), and its correlating pronunciations are clearly expanded, i.e., consisting of more phonetic segments. Thus, taking the grammatical status into consideration, the pragmatic function and the actual pronunciation of *altså*, this article suggests that Modern Standard Danish has two words that are spelled *altså*.

**KEYWORDS:** phonetic reduction; subjectivization; grammaticalization; modal particle; interjections