

**THE SPEAKER'S PART: APPROVING AND HEDGING:
PERSPECTIVAL ASPECTS OF DUTCH VERBAL CLAUSAL
COMPLEMENTATION IN THE COMMUNICATION FIELD**

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Abstract : The focus in this paper is on a particular aspect of the clausal complementation of verbs of verbal communication. The first one is the use of *om te* ('to') in infinitival complementation, here referred to as 'approving', the second one the use of the preposition *van* ('from', 'of'), here referred to as 'hedging'. In a number of cases it is possible to insert *om* in the *te-* infinitive construction, normally indicating an aim in final clauses. In colloquial Dutch the preposition *van* can introduce direct or indirect speech. In both cases it is the speaker's perspective that is expressed.

Keywords : cognitive grammar, complementation, perspective, speech act verbs, verb meaning

1. INTRODUCTION

Most linguistic approaches deal with the linking of verb meanings or more precisely of the meaning of their readings on the one hand and their respective complementation patterns on the other hand, including those resulting from metaphorization mechanisms. The central questions here are whether syntactic similarities entail semantic similarities and whether syntactic dissimilarities entail semantic dissimilarities. The adequacy of the approaches partly depends on the complexity of the subsets of the lexicon that are being described, i.e. the semantic fields. The perception field, for instance, is relatively transparent: generally a difference in meaning or reading corresponds to a difference in complementation pattern. Rather general concepts such as 'event' and 'proposition' combined with an adequate syntactic apparatus suffice, although

there are minor or major differences between individual languages (Atkins *et al.*, 1995), Vliegen, 1986, 1996)). Verbs of verbal communication, i.e. 'speech act verbs', however, do show various patterns but they don't seem to point to different meanings or readings. Some of these patterns can be related to the distinction subjective/personal and objective/impersonal (Wierzbicka, 1988), although not necessarily in these terms. The following possible complements are said to show a decreasing grade of subjectivity with respect to the complement:

Direct speech > infinitival complement > that - clause.

Vanparijs (1993), however, showed that the situation is even more complicated: there are hybrids like semi-indirect speech as shown in the following example:

(1) (a) So I suggested we dine. (b) But Priscilla wasn't hungry. (c) She had eaten too much of the smoked salmon at the reception. (d) I proposed we visit a few of the places we had known together, have a few drinks, perhaps dance. (e) Dancing, she claimed, would exhaust her utterly. (f) Did I want that? (g) No. I didn't. (h) And as for the drinks she had no wish to be left tossing restlessly, while I snored my way into a hangover. (i) Did I snore by the way? (j) No, I didn't. (LOB)

2. TWO OPTIONAL COMPLEMENTIZERS

We would like to focus on two patterns that are found with Verbs of Verbal Communication mainly in spoken Dutch. They are both optional. Our claim is that both of them express aspects of the speaker's attitude towards the content of the complement. The first pattern is the optional use of *om* in infinitival *te* ('to)-clauses as in (2):

(2) *Jan beloofde (om) te komen.* Here an optional *om* is possible.
 Jan promised (C(omplementizer)) to come
 "Jan promised to come"

The second pattern is that of the preposition *van* in combination with some kind of 'reported speech' as in (3):

(3) Marion dacht van ... die man heeft ze ook niet alle zeven op een rijtje.
 Marion thought of ... that man has them also not all seven on a row
 "Marion thought (of) ... that man has a screw loose"

2.1 Object complements with *om* in present-day Dutch

The infinitive clauses in the examples (4) and (5) function as an object complement of Verbs of Verbal Communication. In example (4) the infinitive clause functions as an object complement of a rather general verb such as *zeggen* ('say'). Here the use of *om te* is excluded:

(4) *Moeder zei vroeg thuis te zijn.*
 mother said early home to be
 “Mother said she would be home early”

In example (5) the main clause verb has a more specific meaning. In discussing nominalizations of these verbs the Dutch reference grammar ANS (Geerts, 1984) offers the label “additional meaning element, for example ‘purpose’”. In these cases *om* is optional (5):

(5) *De generaal beval de soldaten (om) de stad te veroveren.*
 the general ordered the soldiers C the city to conquer
 “The general ordered the soldiers to conquer the city”

In the past twenty years a number of articles and books on the use and meaning of *om te* in object complements have been published: see (Janssen, 1991) for an overview. The observations and results are related to three aspects: the meaning of the main clause verbs, the semantic status of the infinitival complement and the position of the speaker. In the following we will summarize their results critically.

Verb meaning

Verbs such as *beloven* (‘promise’) and *weigeren* (‘refuse’) have two readings. In the first reading, ((a)-sentence), as a Verb of Verbal Communication, there is no verb clustering at the end of the subclause, i.e. extraposition is possible: here *om* can be used optionally. In the second reading, ((b)-sentence), as a ‘modal’ verb (Geerts, 1984) there is verb clustering at the end of the subclause, i.e. extraposition is not possible: *om* cannot be used. This allows us to distinguish systematically between the two readings (a- and b-example).

(6a) *De secretaresse bevestigde dat de chauffeur weigerde*
 ‘the secretary confirmed that the driver refused
 (*om*) *de motor te starten.*
 (C) the engine to start
 “The secretary confirmed that the driver refused to start the engine”

(6b) *De secretaresse bevestigde dat de motor weigerde*
 the secretary confirmed that the engine refused
 (**om*) *te starten*
 (C) to starten
 “The secretary confirmed that the engine failed to start”

These examples show that the use of *om te* is at least partly motivated by the meaning of the verbs presented here: with the ‘communication meaning’ both *te* and *om te* can be used, with the ‘modal meaning’ only *te* is possible.

In (Vliegen, fc.) we also show that the occurrence of *om te* depends on the meaning of the main clause verb in yet another aspect. In relation to the overall percentage of *om te*-cases in present-day Dutch corpora three groups of verbs have been analysed: The directive *aanraden* (‘advise’)-group with comparatively many *om te*-cases; the commissive *beloven* (‘promise’)-group taking a position in the middle; the *weigeren* (‘refuse’)-group expressing reluctance with few *om te*-cases. Now this threefold division can be related to the meaning of the verbs.

Considering the first group from the point of view of the subject of the main clause one might say that here the 'approval of the realization of the infinitival complement's content plays a role. In the second group the subject commits itself to the content of the infinitival complement, but strictly speaking this of course is not directly related to its approval from the subject's point of view. In the third group the subject's approval of the non-realization of the complements's content is expressed.

Semantic status of the complement

Janssen (1991) claims that 'om te' in complement sentences indicates a "hypothetical aim", that is, "orientation or destination towards a goal" i.e. a purposiveness towards the completion of the event. The state of affairs is presented as "potential". Here *om te* is optional:

(7) *Karel probeerde (om) goed op te letten.*
 Charles tried (C) good to pay attention'
 "Charles tried to pay close attention"

Janssen (1991) does not explicitly mention whose aim or orientation he is talking about. As we are discussing control verbs it seems obvious that it is the aim or orientation of the controlling element that is meant. With directives such as Dutch *bevelen* ('command') it is the main clause object that controls the complement, since the hearer and the implicit Agent of the subclause are usually coreferential; with commissives such as Dutch *beloven* ('promise') it is the main clause subject that controls the complement, since the speaker and the implicit Agent of the subclause are usually coreferential (Comrie, 1984). However, Van Haaften (1991), who gives an excellent overview of the use of *om te*, also lists nouns such as *angst* ('fear') and *vrees* ('fear') as being capable of taking *om te*-complements. In examples like (8) the 'controlling' element is *zijn* (possessive pronoun, third person). Here the relation between the controlling element and the controlled complement is more complicated, even more so since the controlling element is not an Agent, but rather an Experiencer. The aim or orientation of an Experiencer, is rather unspecific.

(8) *In zijn angst om buiten de boot te vallen ... (INL-corpus¹)*
 in his fear (C) out the boat to fall
 "In his fear to miss the boat"

As we show in (Vliegen, fc.) the frequency of *om te* here depends on the extent to which subjects are involved in the subclause event: An Agent is more active than the Experiencer, the Experiencer is more active than the Patient. This order of semantic roles can be described as representing decreasing subject intervention (A > E > P).

Position of the speaker

First person subjects coincide with the speaker in the case of the singular form (*ik* ('I')) and include the speaker in the case of the plural form (*wij* ('we')). In (Vliegen, fc.) we conclude that the percentage of *om te*-cases increases when speaker, subject and Agent coincide. The comparably strong preference for *om te* of first person subjects even with *weigeren* ('refuse') shows that it is indeed the intensity of the approval, guided by the main verb's meaning:

realization of the complement's content in the directive and commissive group, non-realization in the *weigeren* ('refuse') group.

2.2 *Van* as a complementizer

In the next examples the preposition *van* ('of') is used decreasingly as a typical preposition. The examples are taken from the Van Dale Dutch -English dictionary (Martin & Tops, 1991).

- (9) Een jas met van die koperen knopen.
A coat with of those brass buttons
"A coat with some of those brass buttons"
- (10) Het gaat van rikketikketik.
It goes of tic-tac-tic-tac
"It goes tic-tac-tic-tac"
- (11) Hij keek me aan (zo) van &moet dat nou?
He looked me on so of must that now
"He looked at me as if to say &is that really necessary?&"

In these examples *van* indicates that the kind of buttons is rather familiar to the participants involved in the speech event (9), 'tic-tac-tic-tac' is a tentative description of the sound (10) and an interpretation by the Speaker of the facial expression of the subject (11): A description of the meaning of *van* could be: 'something like'.

Now Verkuyl (1976/7) among others calls *van* in the following examples the 'performative' *van*. Note that this use is not restricted to performative contexts only (example (14)). *Van* can be combined with rather general Verbs of Verbal Communication such as *zeggen* ('say', 'tell') but also with verbs such as *denken* ('think'):

- (12) Mijn buurman zei/ dacht van wel.
My neighbour said/ thought of yes
"My neighbour said/thought so"
- (13) Peter zei van niet.
Peter said of not
"Peter denied (it)"

Also possible are the following examples (example (3) is here repeated as (14a)):

- (14a) Marion zei/dacht van ... die man heeft ze ook niet alle zeven op een rijtje.
- (14b) Marion dacht (van) dat ('that') die man ze ook niet alle zeven op een rijtje heeft/had.
- (14c) Marion dacht &Die man heeft ze ook niet alle zeven op een rijtje&. (direct speech)

Genee (1994) characterizes *van* here as a quotative complementizer that expresses 'mitigation' from the part of the speaker.

Van also occurs with nominalizations of verbs:

- (15) Met opmerkingen erbij (zo) van ... dan gaan we lekker vrij zwemmen, jongens.
With remarks with it so of then go we nice free swim, boys

With remarks like

In contrast to the *om te* examples here the speaker usually is not identical with the subject. However past tense in the main clause makes first person subjects possible:

(16) Ik dacht van ... wat een leuke vent is dat.
 I thought of ... what a nice guy is that
 "I thought ... quite a nice guy he is"

Examples from the Leiden 38MLN-corpus:

(17) Dan zie je de mensen kijken van: 'Wat? Wat?
 Then see you the people look of: What? What?
 "You see people look like: What? What?"

(18) Iedereen schreewt van: het moet, het moet.
 Everybody shouts of: it must, it must.
 "Everybody shouts: Do it, do it"

(19) Ze roepen al snel zoiets van: ophangen dat tuig.
 They shout already quick something of: hang the scum
 "They shout rather early ... something like: noose the riffraff"

(20) Ik dacht van: wat gebeurt daar nou?
 I thought of: what happens there now?
 "I thought: what is going on there?"

In these examples the speaker reports speech but he is distancing himself from the very content. The speaker indicates by means of *van*: This is what was said but you cannot hold me responsible for having not exactly quoted the person (Van der Horst, 1982), i.e. Genee's mitigation.

2.3 Verb meaning and the subject's perspective

The two phenomena can be connected with each other. In some sense they are complementary: on the one hand one *om te* can not be combined with *van*-verbs that are generally very general assertives like *zeggen* as we said before (see 2.1). On the other hand one would not expect *van* with the verbs that show a high degree of *om te*-cases, thus indicating the speaker's approval of the realization of the event expressed in the complement clause. This hypothesis seems to be correct:

om as a complementizer cannot be combined with typical *van*-verbs:

(21a) De verkoper zei (*om) de auto te wassen.
 The salesman said (*C) the car to wash
 "The salesman said he would wash the car"

(21b) Ik zei van ik was de auto /van dat ik de auto zou wassen.

Van as a complementizer can be combined with typical *om te*-verbs in a very restricted way: Third person subjects are sometimes acceptable, first person subjects hardly. The acceptability depends on the kind of *om te*-verb (see 2.2.1):

Relatively high frequency of *om te* as in the *aanraden*-group: *van* is nearly impossible.

(22a) De verkoper heeft jullie aangeraden (om) de auto te wassen.
 The salesman has you advised (C) the car to wash
 "The salesman has advised you to wash the car"
 (22b) ?De verkoper heeft jullie aangeraden van ~~ik~~ was je auto.
 (22c) *Ik heb jullie aangeraden ... van ~~ik~~ was je auto.

Average frequency of *om te* as in the *beloven*-group: *van* is nearly impossible.

(23a) De verkoper heeft jullie beloofd (om) de auto te wassen.
 The salesman has you promised (C) the car to wash
 "The salesman promised to wash the car"
 (23b) *De verkoper heeft jullie beloofd van ~~ik~~ was de auto".
 (23c) ? De verkoper heeft jullie beloofd van dat hij de auto zou wassen.
 (23d) *Ik heb jullie beloofd van ... ik was de auto.

Low frequency of *om te* as in the *weigeren*-group: here *van* becomes more acceptable.

(24a) De verkoper heeft gedreigd (om) de auto te wassen.
 The salesman has threatened (C) the car to wash
 "The salesman threatened to wash your car"
 (24b) De verkoper heeft gedreigd van ~~ik~~ was de auto.
 (24c) De verkoper heeft gedreigd van dat hij de auto zou wassen.
 (24d) ?Ik heb gedreigd van ... ik was de auto.

3. CONCLUSION

Langacker (1990) uses the term 'ground' for the speech event, its participants, both speaker ('I') and hearer ('you'), its immediate circumstances such as time ('now') and place ('here') of speaking. Each of these elements can be either 'onstage', that is explicitly mentioned, or 'offstage', only implicitly present. Finite clauses, just like verbs, profile relations. Within this relation participants can be salient or explicit. Within CG there is a principled asymmetry between the trajector, a participant with special prominence and other participants called landmark(s). As a clause-level manifestation of the trajector/landmark asymmetry there is the subject/object distinction. In the instance of 'I' some part of the ground, the speaker/subject, is put onstage and profiled. In the instance of 'beside you' the hearer/object is realized as an overtly specified participant. In the instance of the performative use of a verb the speech event as a whole "goes onstage as the profile of a finite clause" (Langacker, 1991). The difference between a performative and a descriptive reading, therefore, lies in the fact that in the former case the speech event is onstage, and in the latter it is offstage, even if the speech act participants themselves are explicitly expressed. Our findings with respect to the two complementizers *om te* and *van* can be related to this:

om te is an indicator of the approval of a preferably profiled speaker towards the fulfillment of an action, *van* is an indicator of the reluctance/the hedging (Lakoff, 1972) of a preferably not profiled speaker to be held responsible or to be taken as an objective reporter.

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¹ Two corpora of the Dutch Institute for Lexicology in Leiden have been used. The first (27 million tokens (=27MLN)) contains not only journalism but also non-spontaneous speech, the second (38 million tokens (=38MLN)) contains just several editions of the newspaper NRC.