

## Lexical items merged in functional heads

### The grammaticalization path of ECM-verbs in Dutch dialects

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**SUMMARY** This paper focuses on a hitherto undiscussed case of object agreement found on certain ECM-imperatives in Dutch dialects. We argue that this construction represents an intermediate stage on the grammaticalization path of these verbs between on the one hand their use as full-fledged lexical verbs and on the other their use as discourse particles. Following Cardinaletti & Giusti (2001), we take these three cases to represent the following three theoretical options: (a) lexical items merged in lexical positions (ECM-verbs in their regular use), (b) lexical items merged in functional positions (inflected imperatives of ECM-verbs), and (c) functional items merged in functional positions (ECM-verbs as discourse particles).

**THE DATA** As is well-known, there is no object agreement in Dutch (dialects). A hitherto unnoticed exception to this generalization, however, concerns examples such as that in (1) from Rotterdam Dutch.

- (1) *Kijk-e die koeie es gek doen!*  
look-PL those cows PRT crazy do  
'Look at those cows going crazy!'

In this example the ECM-verb *kijk* 'look' agrees with the subject of the embedded infinitival to which it normally assigns (object) accusative case. Changing the number of that DP leads to the obligatory absence of the agreement ending:

- (2) *Kijk(\*-e) die koe es gek doen!*  
look-PL that cow PRT crazy do  
'Look at that cow going crazy!'

In what follows we show that this construction has both functional and lexical properties.

**FUNCTIONAL PROPERTIES** (i) **closed class of verbs:** the pattern in (1) is only found with *kijken* 'look', *horen* 'hear' and *laten* 'let'. No other verb can agree with its object:

- (3) \**Vertel-e die verhalen es!*  
tell-PL those stories PRT

(ii) **morphological defectiveness:** the object agreement pattern only occurs in the imperative:

- (4) \**Ik kijk-e die koeie es gek doen.*  
I look-PL those cows PRT crazy do

(iii) **no arguments:** the imperative verb does not take any arguments of its own, i.e. there is no *pro*-subject in (1). This is supported by the fact (a) that anaphor binding is impossible in inflected imperatives (cf. (5)) and (b) that subject-oriented purpose clauses are similarly ruled out (shown in (6)).

- (5) *Kijk(\*-e) jezelf es gek doen!*  
look-PL yourself PRT crazy do
- (6) *Laat(\*-e) die kinderen es ophouden door ze te slaan!*  
let-PL those children PRT stop by them to hit  
'Make those children stop by hitting them!'

(iv) **bleached, adhortative meaning:** the construction in (1) has no real imperative force: it is infelicitous in true imperative contexts as in (7) and cannot be coordinated with true imperatives, cf. (8).

- (7) *Ik beveel je: laat(\*-e) deze mensen naar binnen gaan!*  
I order you let-pl these people to inside go  
'I order you: let these people go inside!'
- (8) *Laat(\*-e) die kinderen ophouden en stop ze in hun bed!*  
let-pl those children stop and put them in their bed

**LEXICAL PROPERTIES** (i) **basic lexical semantics:** in spite of the bleached semantics of (1), the verb *kijk* ‘look’ still retains its basic semantics of using one’s vision. As such it contrasts with the use of *kijk* as a discourse particle:

- (9) *Kijk, je moet dat doen zonder te kijken.*  
look you must that do without to look  
'Look, you have to do that without looking.'

(ii) **secondary theta-role:** while *kijk* ‘look’ does not assign a theta-role of its own, it does impose secondary theta-restrictions on the DP it agrees with. In particular, this DP has to be agentive:

- (10) *Kijk-e die mensen / \*die tafels es in de weg staan!*  
look-PL those people / those tables PRT in the way stand  
'Look at those people/\*tables standing in the way!'

**THE ANALYSIS** This specific mix of functional and lexical properties is mirrored almost exactly in Cardinaletti & Giusti’s (2001) discussion of semi-lexical motion verbs in Germanic and Romance. They focus on the construction illustrated in the following Sicilian example:

- (11) *Vaju a pigghiu u pani.*  
go.1sg to fetch.1sg the bread  
'I go fetch the bread.'

As pointed out by C&G, the motion verbs found in this construction (i) belong to a closed class, (ii) are morphologically defective, and (iii) take no arguments or adjuncts, while at the same time (i) they retain their basic motional meaning, and (ii) they assign a secondary (agentive) theta-role to their subject. We take this parallelism to be non-accidental and apply the basic insight of C&G’s analysis to our data. They propose that the motion verb *vaju* ‘go.1sg’ is merged in the first functional head higher than the position occupied by *a pigghiu* ‘to fetch.1sg’, i.e. this is an instance of a lexical vocabulary item that is merged in a functional head position. We propose the same analysis for the inflected imperative in (1) and can even use the presence of the agreement ending as a way to pinpoint where exactly the verb is merged. In particular, the dialects under consideration here all display so-called complementizer agreement, whereby the complementizer of a finite embedded clause can agree with the subject of the clause it introduces, as in (12).

- (12) *Ik vind dat-e we toffe jongens zijn.*  
I find that-PL we fun guys are  
'I think we're fun guys.'

As argued by Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen (2012) (among others), comp-agreement originates on a low CP-head, say Fin<sup>0</sup>. The fact that the exact same agreement shows up in (1) then suggests that the verb *kijk* is base-generated in this position as well. Given that there is no *pro*-subject in this construction, there is also no accusative case (Burzio’s generalization) and as a result, the embedded ECM-subject has to raise to specTP to receive nominative case. It is in this configuration that the phi-features of Fin<sup>0</sup> get valued and spelled out on *kijk*.

More generally, the picture sketched here is one in which three main stages of grammaticalization can be discerned: in the first one, the lexical verbs are simply inserted in their lexical position (cf. *Ik kijk televisie*. ‘I’m watching television.); in the second, the lexical verb is merged in a functional position (Fin<sup>0</sup> to be precise); and in the third, we are dealing with a fully functional element merged in a functional position (cf. the particle in (9)). We have argued that the microvarietal data from Dutch provides crucial insight into the middle stage of this development.