

Lexical items moving up the tree: Grammaticalization of ECM-verbs in Dutch

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Synopsis

MAIN TOPIC
identifying the different steps in the grammaticalization of verbs into discourse markers

CENTRAL DATA

• imperatives of ECM-verbs in Dutch dialects can be perception verbs and causative verbs

(1) Hoor hem es lachen!
hear hem PRT laugh
'Listen to him laugh!'

(2) Laat hem maar komen!
let him PRT come
'Let him come!'

• ECM-verbs in Dutch (dialects) can show up in three imperative(-like) contexts:

(3) Kijk die koeien es gek doen.
look those cows PRT crazy do
'Look at those cows go crazy!' **regular imperatives**

(4) Kijk-e die koeien es gek doen.
look-PL those cows PRT crazy do
'Look at those cows go crazy.' **inflected imperatives**

(5) Kijk, die koeien doen gek.
look those cows do crazy
'Look, those cows are going crazy.' **discourse particles**

MAIN GIST OF THE ANALYSIS
the examples in (3)-(5) illustrate three main stages of grammaticalization:

1. lexical verbs that are inserted in their lexical position (cf. (3))
2. lexical verbs merged in a functional position (cf. (4))
3. functional elements merged in a functional position (cf. (5))

Background: grammaticalization

Benjamin (2010); Waltérit and Detges (2007): discourse markers are typically derived from imperatives

Roberts and Roussou (1999): grammaticalization is a change from a lexical to a functional category

characteristics of functional items vs. lexical ones (see Abney (1987); Hopper and Traugott (1993)):

1. functional items can be phonologically reduced
2. functional items have a semantically bleached meaning
3. functional items permit only one complement, which is generally not an argument
4. functional items form a closed class
5. functional items can be morphologically defective

Properties of ECM-Verbs in Dutch

| | regular imperative | inflected imperative | imperative as discourse marker |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| phonological reduction | - | - | + |
| bleached meaning | - | +/- | + |
| lack of argument structure | - | +/- | + |
| closed class | - | + | + |
| morphological defectiveness | - | + | + |

• **proposal: multiple Merge positions:**
the three imperative(-like) contexts in which ECM-verbs appear in Dutch dialects reflect three possible merge positions for these verbs:

– **the regular imperative is merged in V and raises to C** (full argument structure, full morphological paradigm, open class, ...)

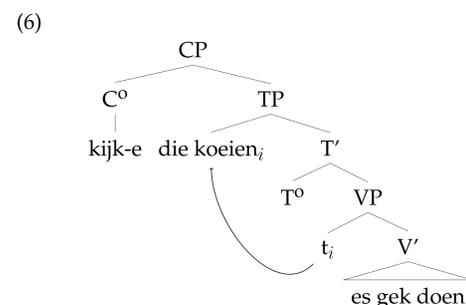
– **the inflected imperative is merged directly in C** (properties of the lexical ECM-verb (secondary theta-role, basic lexical semantics), properties of being merged in a functional head (morphological deficiency, closed class, no argument structure)

– **the imperative used as a discourse marker is merged in a functional head higher than C** (no argument structure, no morphological paradigm, closed class, no lexical meaning, ...) (see also Haegeman (2010))

Zooming in on Inflected imperatives

1. If there is no *pro*-subject in inflected imperatives, how does the EPP get satisfied?
2. If there is no external theta-role, there is no case for the embedded ECM-subject (Burzio's generalization), so how does that DP get case-licensed?
3. Where does the agreement ending on the verb come from?
4. Why can only ECM-verbs occur as inflected imperatives?

Proposal: in inflected imperatives the ECM-subject raises to specTP, thus satisfying the EPP. Moreover, it receives nominative case in this position.



Corroborating evidence:

correlation between overt subjects and agreement (cf. Bennis (2006)):

- (7) a. Kom*(-en) jullie eens hier!
come-AGR you_{pl} PRT here
b. Kom*(-t) u eens hier!
come-AGR you_{polite} PRT here
c. Kom*(-t) jij eens hier!
come-AGR you_{regional} PRT here

→ the raised ECM-subject overtly fills specTP and as a consequence, the imperative verb has to display agreement with this raised subject.

case: if the post-verbal DP in inflected ECM-imperatives is in specTP, it should bear nominative case → this prediction is borne out:

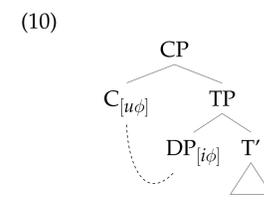
- (8) Kijk-e { wij / *ons } es gek doen.
look-PL we / us PRT crazy do
'Look at us go crazy.'

Source of the agreement

correlation: all dialects with inflected imperatives also have so-called complementizer agreement and these comp-agreement endings are from the same morphological paradigm as the endings found on inflected imperatives:

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

standard analysis of comp-agreement: there are unvalued ϕ -features on C that Agree with and are valued by the subject in specTP (Craenenbroeck and Koppen (2008); Haegeman and Koppen (2012))



Why only ECM-verbs?

- (11) Vertel(*-e) die verhalen es.
tell-PL those stories PRT
'Tell those stories.'
- (12) Overtuig(*-e) die jongens es om te komen.
convince-PL those boys PRT for to come
'Convince those boys to come.'

assumption: this is related to the fact that subjects in imperatives are necessarily agentive Jensen (2003, 163):

- (13) a. Go away!
b. *Know French!

consequence: if a DP other than the subject of the imperative verb raises to specTP (as is the case in inflected ECM-imperatives), it must bear an [AGENT]-theta role ⇒ it must be the external argument of a lower predicate + this external argument must be allowed to undergo A-movement ⇒ agentive ECM-subjects are the only DPs that can partake in this construction

Conclusions

- Three main stages of grammaticalization in Dutch ECM-imperatives:
 1. lexical verbs merged in lexical positions (regular imperatives)
 2. lexical verbs merged in functional positions (inflected imperatives)
 3. functional elements merged in functional positions (imperatives as discourse markers)
- each of these stages has its own characteristic syntactic, morphological and lexical properties, which stage 2 occupying an intermediate position between the other two
- microvariational data from Dutch provide crucial insight into the middle stage of the development

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