

IP-ELLIPSIS IN DUTCH DIALECT CLEFTS

AELBRECHT Lobke

Linguistics Department, Catholic University Brussels (Brussels), Belgium

lobke.aelbrecht@kubrusssel.ac.be

Résumé : A number of Belgian Dutch dialects feature elliptical sentences of the type “X + *that*-clause”, with X an adverb or adjective: *Misschien da Kris komt* ‘It is perhaps the case that Kris comes’ (lit. perhaps that Kris comes). I claim that this construction involves a type of IP-ellipsis on a par with an analysis of sluiced clefts proposed by Van Craenenbroeck (2004). Their underlying structure corresponds to *Het is misschien zo da Kris komt* ‘It is perhaps the case that Kris comes’ (lit. it is perhaps so that Kris comes).

Mots-clés : Generative syntax, ellipsis, sluicing, Dutch dialects

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the previously undiscussed Dutch dialect construction “X + *that*-clause”, where XP is an adverbial or adjectival phrase. An example is given in (1).

- (1) *Waarschijnlijk/Goed da Kris komt.*
probably/ good that Kris comes
“It is probable/good that Kris comes.”

I claim that this construction involves a type of IP-ellipsis on a par with an analysis of sluiced clefts proposed by Van Craenenbroeck (2004). The underlying structure of (1) is the one in (2).

- (2) *Het is waarschijnlijk zo da Kris komt.*
it is probably so that Kris comes
“It is probably the case that Kris comes.”

2. The data

2.1. What is XP ?

At first sight three groups of words occur in the first position in “X + *that*-clause”: sentential adverbs, adjectives and elements that are ambiguous between the two, such as *waarschijnlijk* ‘probable/probably’. This categorization is reflected in the semantically equivalent construction *het is X (zo) dat IP* ‘it is X (so) that IP’. The adverbs only occur with *zo* ‘the-case’, while the adjectives and *zo* cannot co-occur. The third class is grammatical in both constructions, i.e. with and without *zo*.

- (3) a. *Het is misschien/blijkbaar *(zo) da Kris komt.* → *Het is ADV *(zo) dat IP*
it is perhaps /apparently so that Kris comes it is ADV *(so) that IP
“It is perhaps/apparently the case that Kris comes.”
b. *Het is logisch/jammer (*zo) da Kris komt.* → *Het is ADJ (*zo) dat IP*
it is logical/unfortunate so that Kris comes it is ADJ (*so) that IP
“It is logical/unfortunate that Kris comes.”
c. *Het is waarschijnlijk/zeker (zo) da Kris komt.* → *Het is ADJ/V (zo) dat IP*
it is probably/ certainly so that Kris comes it is ADJ/V (so) that IP
“It is probably/certainly the case that Kris comes”

Semantically, the adverbs that occur in “X + *that*-clause” sit in the specifier of the speaker-oriented Mod-nodes in Cinque’s (1999) hierarchy, i.e. Mod_{epistemic}, Mod_{irrealis}, Mod_{necessity} and Mod_{possibility}. The adjectives are expressions of the evaluative Mood-node.

2.2. *ModP*

On closer inspection, more than a single constituent can occur to the left of the complementizer in (*het is*) X (*zo*) *dat* IP ‘(it is) X (so) that IP’: there are positions available for an adverbial part, the particle *wel*, negation or affirmation and an adjective, which is the predicate of the matrix clause.

- (4) Het is misschien wel nie {vreemd/zo} da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.
 it is perhaps PRT not strange/so that Jessica it her told has
 “It is perhaps not strange/the case that Jessica has told her.”

The position of the adjectival predicate is obligatorily filled; all others are optional. When no adjective is available, the semantically weak predicate *zo* ‘the-case’ is inserted in that position. I assume the following structure, bearing in mind that the verb *is* ‘is’ moves to the I-node dominating the ModP in Dutch, leaving V empty:

- (5) [CP [IP het [_I is [ModP ADV [Mod⁰ [_{WelP} wel [_{PolP} niet/wel [_{VP} t_{is} [_{AP} ADJ CP]]]]]]]]]

The same sequence is allowed in “X + *that*-clause”. When the predicate is realized by *zo*, however, it disappears with the other semantically empty elements *het* ‘it’ and *is* ‘is’:

- (6) Misschien wel nie {slecht/*zo} da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.
 perhaps PRT not bad/ so that Jessica it her told has
 “It is perhaps not bad/the case that Jessica has told her.”

Interestingly, ModP is also allowed in Dutch (dialect) sluices which have been argued by Merchant (2001) and Van Craenenbroeck (2004) to involve IP-deletion.

- (7) A: Barbara heeft gezegd dat er iemand misschien een dossier heeft ingediend.
 Barbara has said that there someone perhaps a file has submitted
 “Barbara has said that someone perhaps submitted a file.”
 B: Ah? Wie da misschien dan wel?
 oh who that_{dem} perhaps PRT PRT
 “Oh? Who for instance?”

3. The analysis : IP-deletion

I argue that the proper analysis of “XP *dat* IP” is ellipsis-based. The underlying sentence is “Het is XP (*zo*) *dat* IP”, with ellipsis of the IP containing the semantically empty elements *het is* (*zo*) ‘it is (the-case)’. The construction thus involves two CPs, a matrix clause containing ModP and *het is* ‘it is’ and a clausal complement “*dat* IP” of the adjectival predicate.

- (8) a. [CP [IP Het [_I is [ModP waarschijnlijk [AP {zo/logisch} [CP da ze hem heeft gebeld]]]]]
 it is probably so/logical that she him has called
 “It is probably the case/logical that she called him.”
 b. {Waarschijnlijk/Logisch} da ze hem heeft gebeld.
 probably/ logical that she him has called

The derivation of the elliptical construction proceeds in 3 stages: a first stage represents the underlying structure with *het is* ‘it is’, while the second step moves ModP as a whole out of the IP to the specCP of the matrix clause. The last stage deletes the IP containing only the semantically empty *het* ‘it’ and *is* ‘is’:

- (9) a. 1st stage: [IP Het is [ModP misschien wel nie slecht [CP da Katrien komt]]]
 it is perhaps PRT not bad that Katrien comes
 b. 2nd stage: [CP [ModP Misschien wel nie slecht [CP da Katrien komt]] C^o [IP het is t_{ModP}]]

c. 3rd stage: $[\text{CP } [\text{ModP } \text{Misschien wel nie slecht } [\text{CP } \text{da Katrien komt}]] \text{C}^\circ [\text{perhaps PRT not bad that Katrien comes it is } \text{het is } \text{t}_{\text{ModP}}]]$.

The difference between sluicing and “X + *that*-clause” is that in sluicing the subclause is stranded and elided along with the IP. That is why sluicing needs an antecedent, while “X + *that*-clause” does not. Only semantically empty elements are elided here. *Zo* ‘the-case’ in (the underlying structure of) (6) moves out of the IP to a Mittelfeld-TopP dominating the ModP and as a result, it is elided together with the IP.

References

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