IP-ELLIPSIS IN DUTCH DIALECT CLEFTS

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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. \(\rightarrow\) 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. \(\rightarrow\) 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. \(\rightarrow\) 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 complementsizer in (het is) X (zo) dat IP ‘(it is) X (so) that IP’: there are positions available for an adverval 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 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) \[[CP [IP het [I’ is [ModP ADV [Mod^0 [WelP wel [PolP niet/wel [VP tis [AP ADJ CP]]]]]]]]\]

The same sequence is allowed in “X + that-clause”.

(6) Misschien wel nie {slecht/*zo} da Jessica het haar verteld heeft.  
   “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 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 the case/logical that she him has called”

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 not bad that Katrien comes”

b. 2nd stage: \[[CP [ModP Misschien wel nie slecht [CP da Katrien komt]] C^o [IP het is f_{ModP}]]\]
perhaps PRT not bad that Katrien comes it is
c. 3rd stage: [CP [ModP Misschien wel nie slecht [CP da Katrien komt]] C° [het is in 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