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The development of free adjuncts in English and Dutch

This paper discusses the diachronic development of present-participial free adjuncts in English and Dutch. These non-finite subordinate clauses (or, converb clauses) express an adverbial relation (conditionality in (1)) which is usually not overtly marked by a subordinator (Kortmann 1991: 195), and their underlying subject is as a rule controlled by the matrix subject (generic “you” in (1)).

- (1) **Having made these necessary provisions**, you are to keep in your storehouse every little thing the poor fishermen have occasion for (PPCMBE)

It has been observed that the category of present participle converbs is “highly interesting ... given that the Germanic languages show varying use of converbs both synchronically and diachronically” (Killie 2006: 448). As such, Killie points out that free adjuncts in Norwegian are very uncommon, while in current English the construction is used extensively. Killie & Swan (2009) attribute the successful development of English free adjuncts to the process of grammaticalization, claiming that this “never took place in the other Germanic languages” (2009: 360). Yet, the present paper argues that not all other Germanic languages have behaved similarly. In particular, data from comparable corpora in Dutch and English show a more complex development.

The data used in this paper comprise, for English, the suite of Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English, and for Dutch the *Compilatiecorpus Historisch Nederlands* (1250-1999, excerpted until 1914), a selection of literary texts from the DBNL-corpus (1150-1500), and legal texts from the 38-miljoen-woordencorpus (1805-1914). In addition, four English 19th-century novels (554,497 words) and their contemporary Dutch translation were included. The data were divided into 6 periods covering the 1150-1914 time span.

A comparative analysis of the Dutch and English corpora provides evidence that the development of the free adjunct was parallel in English and Dutch until the 18th century: in both languages free adjuncts dramatically rose in frequency after 1500, and, semantically, the construction increasingly encoded subjectivity. The construction also changed structurally: in (2), the semi-coordinate present participle clause expresses propositional (i.e. non-subjective) “addition” semantics (with “whereby” being a possible paraphrase), while in (3), it occurs sentence-initially as a full-fledged subordinate, and expresses “cause”, a true adverbial meaning.

- (2) Dairtegens Jacop Janz ... op gheantwort heeft, **seggende dat hy** alle anlech ende anspraeck op hem byden scout gedaen vander voirsz saiken all ende geheellic ontschuldich waer [Against which Jacop Janz ... to answered had, saying that he ...] „To which Jacop Jansz had answered, saying that (i.e. whereby he said that) ...”(Compilatiecorpus, 1351-1500)
- (3) ... **het werkje dus verre gebracht hebbende**, vind ik my ten hoogste verplicht... [the work thus far brought having, ..., find I myself highly obliged] „Because I have brought the work thus far, ..., I find myself ...” (Compilatiecorpus, 1711- 1805)

The data furthermore indicate, as also becomes evident from the comparison of English novels with their Dutch translations, that the divergence between English and Dutch roots in the 18-19th century. This paper investigates several language internal and external factors that could have influenced the comparative decrease of the Dutch free adjuncts, such as the parallel loss of the Dutch progressive and the rise of other progressive constructions, the absence of a Dutch gerund on *-ende* and the influence of prescriptivism.

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