The final version of this preprint has been published in Studies in Language, vol. 39, issue 1 (DOI: 10.1075/sl.39.1.07pol). When citing, please cite the published version.

Why is there a Present-day English absolute?[1]

1.Introduction

Whereas the Present-day English (PDE) absolute construction has traditionally been labelled an infrequent, archaic and formal Latinism (Quirk et al. 1985: 1120), some recent studies have contested this view by claiming that the construction is still more productive than often thought (Kortmann 1991:2, König & van der Auwera 1990: 349). In addition, researchers have pointed out that cross-linguistically, English makes significantly more use of this construction than other Germanic languages (Kortmann 1995: 189-192). The reasons for this perceived discrepancy, however, are still largely unknown.

It is the purpose of this article to verify the claim that absolute constructions in English differ substantially in their productivity and frequency from those in other Germanic languages by conducting a diachronic corpus-based comparison between English and Dutch. As it turns out, our data analysis confirms the existence of such a substantial difference. Second, the article will try to pinpoint why exactly this difference exists and will extrapolate these findings to include other Germanic languages such as German, Danish, Norse and Swedish with the aid of the already existing literature on the subject.

It is suggested that two language-internal mechanisms form the basis of the differing frequency of absolutes in both language groups. First, the abundant use of *ing*-forms in English (e.g. gerunds, free adjuncts, progressives) is argued to support the continued existence of present participle absolutes syntagmatically through the mechanism of structural priming: i.e. given x in the preceding context, y is triggered (Loebell & Bock 2003; cf. Section 5.2). Second, the English absolute is supported paradigmatically by virtue of its dual connection to the rest of the language system through two types of functional and formal overlap: one with the gerund, and one with the prepositional postmodifier. In the other Germanic languages, only the latter type of overlap is present, meaning that they have less network links available than has English to support the construction's continued use. An additional, but arguably less crucial, factor is that of language external prescriptivism. Prescriptivism in English grammar never opposed the use of the absolute construction as vehemently or as consistently as happened in other Germanic languages.

2. The absolute construction

Cross-linguistically the absolute construction can be identified as a non-finite construction, which always consists of two core elements: a (pro-)nominal subject and a predicate (Bauer 2000: 261). The predicate is typically a present (1) or past participle (2) but other possible predicate types include perfective participles, noun phrases, adjectival phrases, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases and infinitives (Kortmann 1995: 195).

[1] The research reported in this article was supported by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO).

(1) *The big hard right fist caught Elam on the side of the jaw and stretched the man out on the floor, blood leaking from his mouth*. (COHA, The first mountain man. Forty guns west, 2001)

(2) *Eyes closed, slumped in the dock, Chang, 39, listened for almost two hours while the judges took turns reading the opinion.* (TIME, Death for doubters, 1962)

Based on the presence or absence of an introductory preposition, also called augmentor[2], two main subtypes of the absolute construction can be distinguished (Kortmann 1991: 11). The absolute without an introductory preposition (3a, 3b) is called the unaugmented absolute, and is the oldest and, initially, the most typical of the two (van de Pol 2012). The absolute with an introductory preposition is called the augmented absolute. The preposition or augmentor is typically *with(out)* in PDE (4a) and the equivalent *met* (4b) in Present-day Dutch (PDD).

(3a) *She wiggled into the kitchen on spiked heels, her snug skirt binding her knees in a geisha-like gait*. (COHA, Fiona range, 2000)

(3b) *Er lag een tijdje geleden ineens een brief in mijn hut, zei hij half voor zich uit, zijn blik weer op het grijs daarbuiten gericht*. (Het godsdeeltje, 2012)
'*A while ago, a letter suddenly appeared in my cabin, he muttered by himself, his gaze focused again on the grey outside*.'

(4a) *He stopped a second, then crawled on **with** blood dripping from his chin.* (TIME, At both ends, 1943)

(4b) *Enkele weken later werd hij **met** een kogel door zijn hoofd in Florida gevonden.* (Memoires, 2012)
'*A couple of weeks later he was found in Florida with a bullet through his head*.'

The absolute construction can express a wide variety of semantic relations with its matrix clause, which are often similar to those expressed by finite subordinate adverbial clauses such as reason (5), anteriority (6), or concession (7). However, the absolute can also express elaboration/addition uses (Kortmann 1991: 123; Halliday 2004: 396, 405; van de Pol & Cuyckens 2013a) which may but need not be quasi-coordinate in nature (8). An absolute construction in quasi-coordinate use can be recognized in that the coordinating conjunction *and* (or in some cases its contrastive equivalent *but*) can be placed between the matrix and the absolute turned finite (Behrens & Fabricius-Hansen 2005: 11) without altering its meaning or making the sentence ungrammatical.

(5) *But now, with the campaign against Famagusta looming over him, and the palace full of the wild exhilaration of a conquering army, Nicholas was too occupied to be haunted by anything of the past.* (BNC, Race of scorpions, 1989)

(6) *Shifty-Eyes and Pointy-Beard were in the back, of course, the third cousin having disappeared with the Capri.* (BNC, Angel Hunt, 1991)

[2] Note that there is an important difference between a preposition that introduces the absolute construction as a whole and functions as an augmentor e.g. *with* in (4a) and *met* in (4b), and a preposition that merely introduces a prepositional phrase that functions as the predicate of an absolute construction such as *door* in (4b).

(7) *At present, however, even with the 'top resistance' touch fitted to some electronic instruments, they cannot match the ability of a good pipe organ to exercise effective control of rhythm and phrasing.* (BNC, In tune with heaven: the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Church Music, 1992)

(8) *Insects and some mollusks use a fluid called hemolymph instead of blood, the difference being that hemolymph is not contained in a closed circulatory system.* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood, access: 30-01-2014)

3. Earlier views on the distribution of the absolute construction

In most traditional reference grammars of both English and Dutch the absolute construction is considered to be a rare formal and archaic construction. The *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (Haeseryn et al. 1997) considers only *met*-augmented absolutes to be productive in PDD. Unaugmented absolutes are described by the grammar as isolated, often idiomatic cases of high formality which are mostly preserved in the form of more or less set expressions. For English, Quirk et al. (1985: 1120) state that PDE absolutes are formal and infrequent as well.

Acquiring a clear view of the influence of prescriptive writings would require a separate study of its own, which falls outside the scope of this article. Still, the types of style advice encountered are conspicuously in harmony with the present use of the construction in both languages, which may be taken as indicative of some influence. Recent English style advice seems to have developed a different opinion on the role of the absolute construction in PDE language use, and embraces the construction as a useful addition to the language. Hannay & Mackenzie (2002: 96), for example, encourage the use of absolutes because they are compact and can provide variation from the conventional adverbial clause. Blanpain's (2012) handbook *Academic writing: a resource for researchers* also contains exercises to illustrate how the use of participial clauses, including absolutes, may improve the flow of writing.

In contrast, virtually all Dutch school handbooks (such as *De Dubbelfluit, Nieuw Talent voor Taal, Frappant,* ...) remain silent about the existence of the Dutch absolute. Dutch prescriptive grammars sometimes make mention of the absolute construction, but then usually only in order to warn against its use (Komen 1994: 37). This critique is especially directed against the unaugmented absolute variant with a present participle predicate (Haeseryn et al.1997). This in contrast to the situation in English, where prescriptive rejection is limited to condemning the use of the accusative or objective absolute (9) (Komen 1994: 102) in favour of the nominative absolute (10).

(9) *In any case, I fitted the bill, **me** being the type who'd still suck his thumb if dropped head first in a barrel of bosoms.* (BNC, Zoom, 1989)

(10) *On a number of occasions I found members of the royal household resting. Their horses blown and **they** themselves suffering some injury.* (BNC, Crown in darkness, 1991)

Specific descriptive research into absolute constructions confirms the stance taken up by reference grammars for earlier periods in the history of English. In his article on Middle English and Late Modern English (LModE) absolutes, Ross (1893), for example, concludes that the construction can be considered a marker of a "classical, learned, scholastic style" (1893: 273) and Kohnen (2004: 352) draws attention to the importance of the formality of text types for the development of the absolute in the ModE period. However, corpus research does not corroborate the claims made by these

grammars where the present version of the English language is concerned and appears to side more with the stance of stylistic guidelines found in handbooks of academic writing. Indeed, it has been brought to light that the absolute construction is still productive in English, in written as in spoken language, even if with a markedly lower overall frequency than in the Modern English (ModE) period (van de Pol & Cuyckens 2014). König & van der Auwera (1990: 349), in their cross-linguistic description of participial clauses, also defend this claim by stating that "[a]ugmented absolutes (i.e. those introduced by *with/avec*) are very common even in informal registers of English and French." Moreover, Kortmann's (1991:2) study of PDE absolute constructions and free adjuncts observes that "[i]n written language the frequency of their use decreases proportionally to an increase of the formality of the text type", which is the exact opposite of what is claimed in most traditional grammars.

4. Methodology

The present comparative study of the nature and frequency of the English absolute and absolute constructions from other Germanic languages is primarily based on a diachronic corpus study of English and Dutch with the addition of information on other Germanic languages based on the available literature. For EModE and LModE, two Penn Corpora of Historical English were used: the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (PPCEME; 1500–1710; 1,737,853 words) and the Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English (PPCMBE; 1700–1914; 948, 895 words). Supplementary texts were added in order to assure that the same range of registers[3] was covered for all three periods under investigation. These came from (i) a small poetry corpus compiled by the first author (82,867 words for EModE and 81,951 words for LModE) and (ii) direct speech excerpts totalling 211,037 words from the Old Bailey corpus (Huber et al. 2012). In total, 3,480 absolute constructions were retrieved for EModE and 2,153 for LModE. For PDE, most absolutes were retrieved from extensive excerpts from the British National Corpus (BNC; period 1985–1994) accompanied by some additional material from the Leuven Drama Corpus (1969–1971). This resulted in a total of 3,611,088 words for PDE containing 3,984 absolute constructions. Instances from the Penn corpora were retrieved making use of the corpora's syntactic parses, which specifically tag for absolutes. Data retrieval from the other corpora, which were either untagged or tagged only for part-of-speech, was done manually. The structural diversity of the absolute construction prevents efficient automatic searching when syntactic annotation is lacking, leading to impractically high degrees of noise.

For Late Modern Dutch (LModD), a 19th century selection of 152,275 words from the DBNL corpus was manually searched for absolute constructions, which resulted in a total of 129 absolutes. Registers in the corpus include fiction, poetry, narrative non-fiction and handbooks & sciences. Whereas register coverage is somewhat less varied than it is for English, the effect of this difference is probably not significant. In particular, we have made sure to include those registers with the highest frequencies of absolutes in Present-Day usage (cf. van de Pol & Cuyckens 2014), to prevent the Dutch data from being skewed towards a lower frequency of absolutes than the English data. As a result, if any effect is to be seen in the Dutch data, it will be that frequency of the absolute construction appears to be somewhat higher than it would be in a corpus that is more directly comparable to the English one. For Present-Day Dutch, the same registers and the same search

[3] In the sense of Biber & Conrad (2009). The registers investigated are the following: religious writing, fiction, law, narrative non-fiction, science and handbooks, drama, poetry and (near) spoken English.

methods as for LModD were used. The PDD corpus consists of excerpts from the DBNL (1940-now), with the addition of some excerpts from the Belgian newspaper 'De Standaard Online', and a number of free e-books. In total, the PDD data amount to 377,023 words, from which 137 absolutes were retrieved.

5. Results

5.1 The diachronic development and nature of English and Dutch absolutes

The first part of our analysis consists of an investigation of what the corpus reveals about the diachronic development of absolute constructions in English and Dutch. From Figure 1 it appears that both languages show a clear decline in their use of absolute constructions (from 85 to 36 absolutes per 100,000 words for Dutch and from 191, over 173 to 110 absolutes per 100,000 words for English). Yet, in both the late modern and present-day subperiods the frequency of the absolute construction is markedly higher in English than it is in Dutch. These figures corroborate the claims made in the literature that absolutes are found more frequently in English than in the other Germanic languages. At least for Dutch this appears to be true.

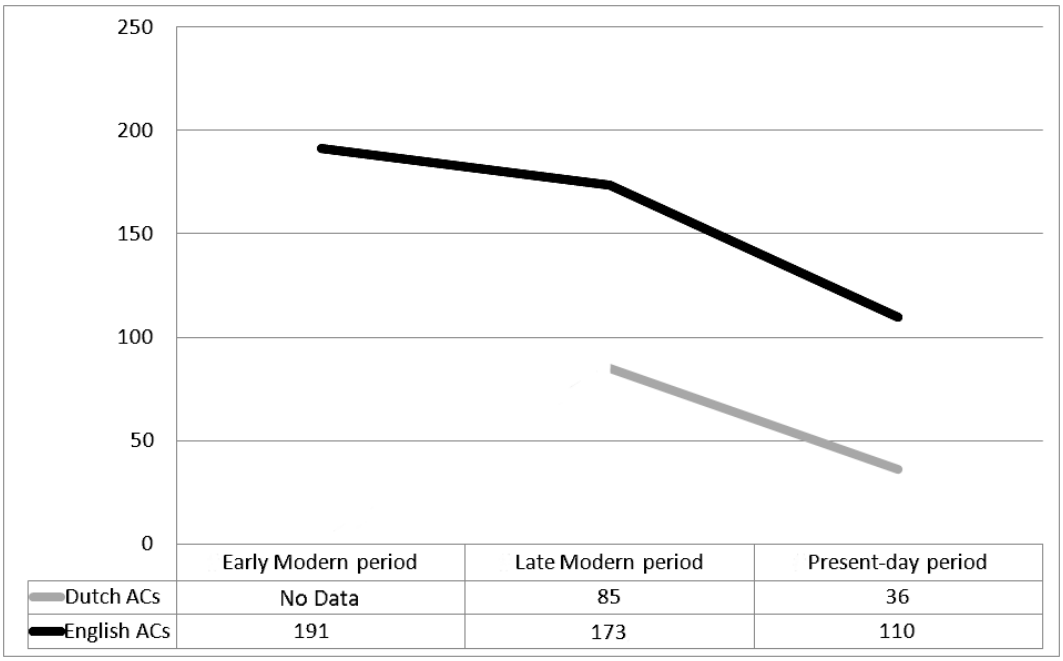

Figure 1: Normalized frequency of the absolute construction (n = 100,000) in English and Dutch

Figure 2 zooms in on the relative frequency of the different predicate types in both periods of Dutch. From this graph, we can infer that the verbal absolute predicate types are on decline in this language. Indeed, absolute constructions with present participles declined in relative frequency from 15% to 4%. The use of the past participle similarly decreased from 26% to 9%. Not only did the relative proportion of participial predicates decrease, their absolute frequency also decreased quite drastically. Absolutes with present participles decreased from 12.5 to 1.3 occurrences per 100,000 words and absolutes with past participles from 21.7 to a mere 3.2 occurrences per 100,000 words.

In contrast, absolute constructions with prepositional phrases, which were already very common in LModD (44% of all the instances of absolute constructions with a normalized frequency

of 37.4 per 100,000 words) became more prominent in PDD (53% of all instances), and retained a normalized frequency of 19.4 per 100,000 words, which is markedly higher than the frequency of the verbal predicate types. Even more remarkable is the increase of absolute constructions with adverbial predicates (e.g. *We'll talk, without a TV on.*) These were only a marginal predicate type in LModD with 5% of all instances (normalized frequency of 4.6 per 100,000 words), but they gained in importance quite spectacularly, taking up 22% of all instances of the absolute construction in PDD, and almost doubling their frequency to 8.2 per 100,000 words.

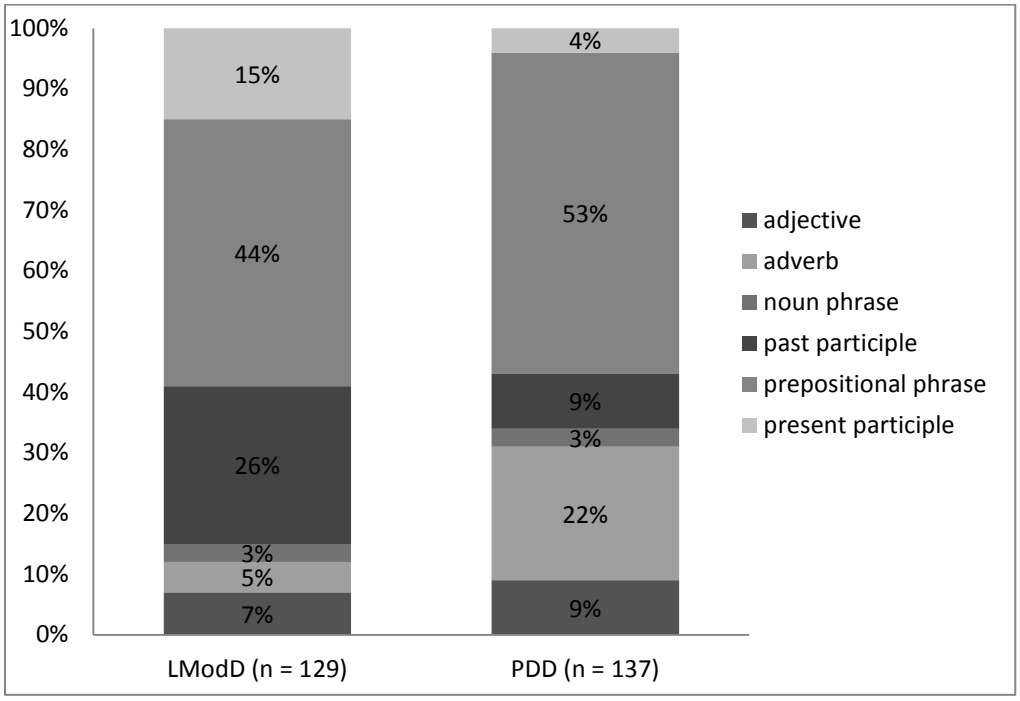

Figure 2: Relative frequency of predicate types in LModD and PDD

Compared to these findings for PDD, the data from PDE show a different picture (Figure 3). Whereas present participles have become rare as an absolute predicate in PDD, they are the primary absolute predicate in PDE, with 41% of the total amount of absolutes. Also, with a frequency of 45.2 per 100,000 words, they are more frequent than all PDD absolute constructions together. This is not unexpected, since present participles have been the most common absolute predicate type in English at least since the Early Modern period (van de Pol & Cuyckens 2014). In contrast, prepositional predicates account for the biggest share (53%) of all absolute types in PDD (compared to 21% in English) and are the only predicate type of absolutes in PDD that is comparable in frequency to its English equivalent, with respectively 19.4 and 23.1 occurrences per 100,000 words.

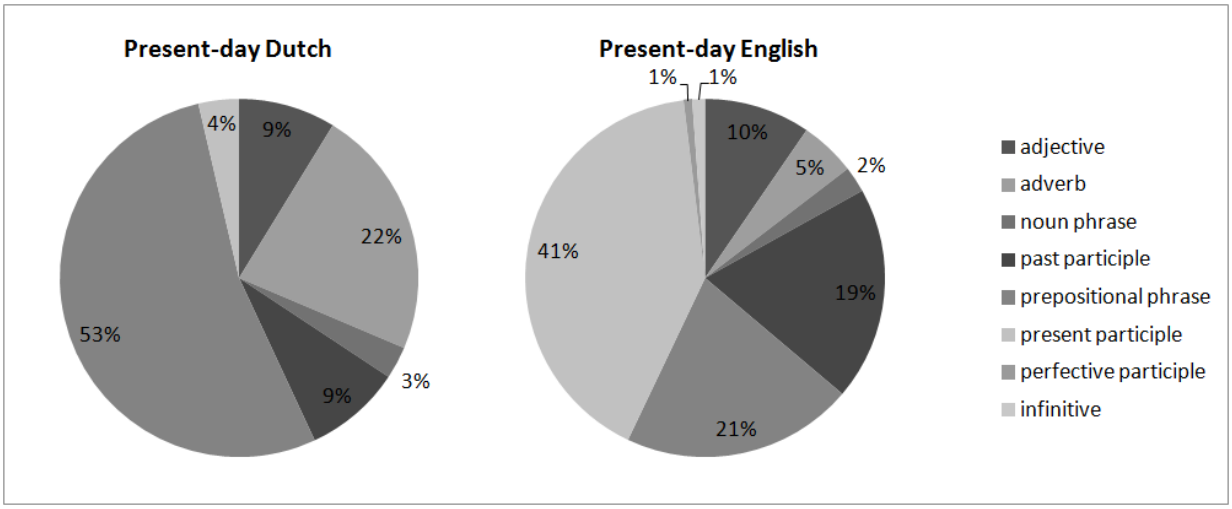

Figure 3: Relative frequency of predicate types in PDD compared to the predicate types in PDE

When we map out the role of *with*/*met*-augmentation (Figure 4), another clear trend emerges: over time augmentation becomes increasingly common in both English ($p<0.001$)[4] and Dutch ($p=0.007$) (from 22% to 44% and from 38% to 55% of the total amount of absolutes respectively), but the development in Dutch has progressed further and the probability that this difference is due to chance is very low ($p=0.018$). In addition, Dutch seems to have been ahead of English in this respect already in the Late Modern period, and also in this period the difference is significant ($p<0.001$).

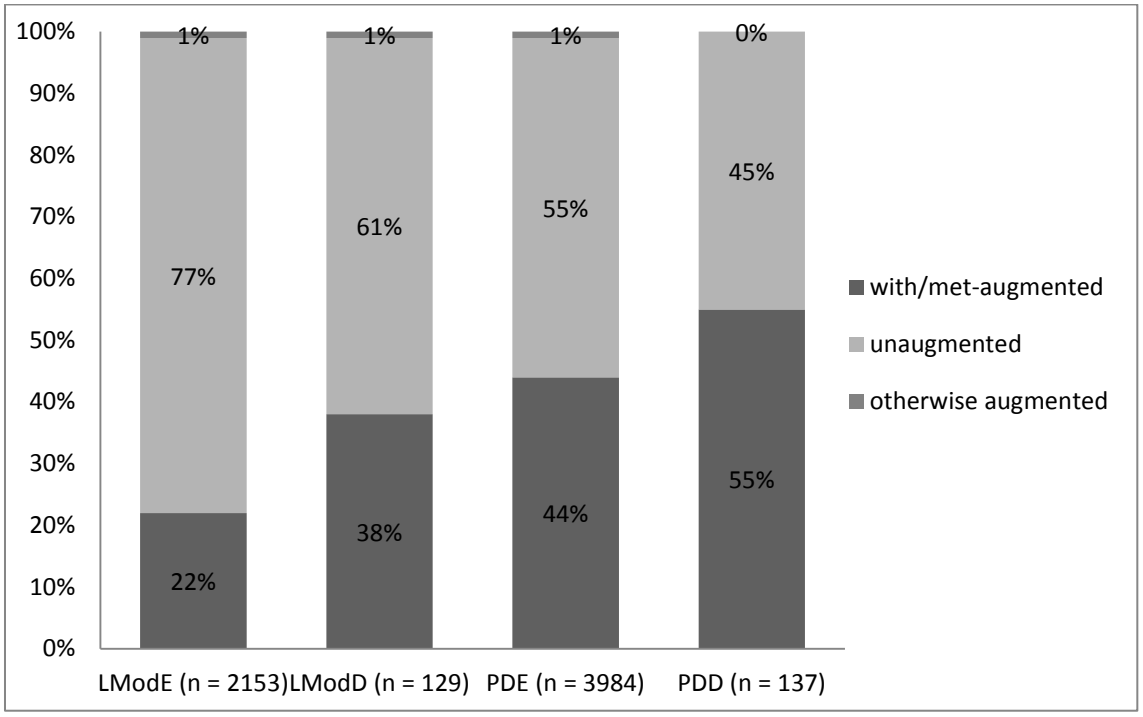

Figure 4: Relative frequencies of augmentation types in LModE, LModD, PDE and PDD

With regard to semantics (Figure 5), we use three main subcategories to map out the most important differences between English and Dutch: elaboration uses, 'weakly' adverbial uses and 'strongly'

[4] P-values mentioned throughout the article are based on chi-squared tests.

adverbial uses. The latter two categories are based on Kortmann's (1991: 121) scale of absolute/free adjunct meanings[5] which was established according to the following principle:

> [*T]he process of identifying some logical role(s) for a given free adjunct/absolute is essentially determined by a scale on which the semantic relations in principle available to these construction types can be arranged according to their informativeness or, alternatively, specificness. [...] Thus 'more informative' [or 'strongly' adverbial] semantic relations will be distinguished from 'less informative' [or 'weakly' adverbial] ones on the basis that the former require more knowledge or (co- or contextually substantiated) evidence in order to be identified as the semantic relation holding between the proposition denoted by a given free adjunct/absolute and some matrix proposition.* (Kortmann 1991: 120)

To give an example, it requires more knowledge to interpret the semantic relation between the two propositions as a causal one, than as merely one of addition. Using this categorization, we can see that in the 20th century, the use of Dutch absolutes is largely limited to expressing relations of elaboration or 'weakly' adverbial uses such as accompanying circumstance or manner. In contrast, 'strongly' adverbial uses, such as cause, condition, concession or anteriority, are rare in PDD. When we compare these findings to the situation for English, we can see that in PDE 'strongly' adverbial uses are still more common than in PDD ($p<0.001$), even though elaboration uses have gained ground over time also in English, from 23.8% in EModE over 32.3% in LModE to 44.1% in PDE (cf. van de Pol & Cuyckens 2013a). The difference between English and Dutch may be related to the fact that 'strongly' adverbial uses (e.g. reason in *With the traffic thickening and the street lights coming on, it would be after four when I got there*) are more commonly expressed by more verbal predicate types (i.e. present and past participles), which are especially on decline in Dutch (cf. Figures 2 & 3). By contrast, instances of elaboration, especially the non-quasi-coordinate ones, are more commonly expressed by non-verbal predicate types such as adjectives (e.g. *The little man nodded his bald head, his eyes simple as a child's*).

[5] With the exception that the semantic relation of 'result' has been moved down the scale somewhat in the interpretation of the data from this study when compared to Kortmann's scale, because the corpus examples of absolutes with this semantic relation often tended to be ambiguous between resultative and quasi-coordinate elaboration readings.

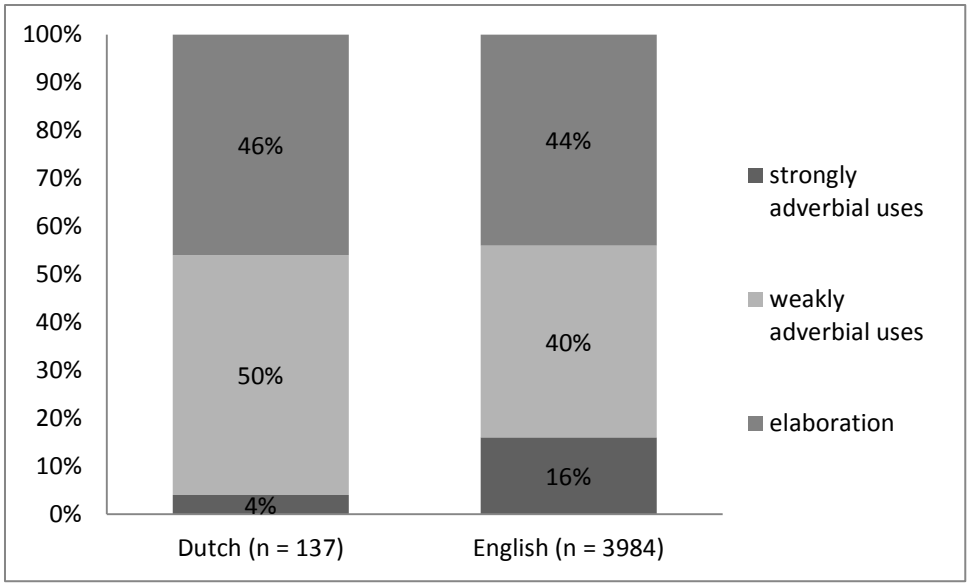

Figure 5: Relative frequency of the semantics of absolutes in PDD and PDE

5.2 Structural priming

The frequency and nature of absolute constructions has been shown to differ in various respects in English and Dutch, with English making generally significantly more and also more varied use of absolutes. How, then, can we account for these differences? A first language internal factor that may be at play is the phenomenon of structural priming (Loebell & Bock 2003: 791, Pickering & Ferreira 2008); sometimes also referred to as syntactic persistence (Szmrecsanyi 2006: 10) or syntactic priming type II (Szmrecsanyi 2006: 10).

> In structural priming, the form of one construction [e.g. the *-ing*-suffix of the gerund] is echoed in the form of a second construction [e.g. the *-ing*-suffix in the present participle absolute], which may but need not be otherwise related to the first [...] It can occur without the intention to create syntactic parallelism and without specific pragmatic, thematic, and lexical support across utterances. (Loebell & Bock 2003: 791)
>
> An utterance [then] takes the grammatical form that it does because the procedures controlling its syntax are more activated than the procedures responsible for an alternative form, with the higher level of activation being an automatic consequence of the prior production of the same form. (Bock 1986: 379)

Structural priming then focuses on 'the facilitative effect on the processing of a given sentence of having just processed a sentence with the same or similar syntactic structure' (Nicol 1996: 675). First, the formal similarity between the two constructions leads to their cognitive association in the language user's mind, i.e. the constructions are perceived as closely related in the language network and therefore as being instantiations of a more general type (Traugott & Trousdale 2013). The existence of this association in turn makes either construction cognitively more accessible and therefore more likely to occur when the other construction has been used previously. It is also important to note that 'priming arises automatically, and does not depend on particular communicative intentions or prime-target relationships (e.g., question and answer; Levelt & Kelter 1982) or discourse factors such as register (Weiner & Labov 1983) in order to manifest itself' (Pickering & Ferreira 2008). For example, the use of *ing*-forms (in gerunds or present participle

absolutes) increases the likelihood of more *ing*-forms (in gerunds or present participle absolutes) appearing in the same text. This entails that the frequencies of structurally associated constructions are inextricably linked to each other, meaning that, in a kind of snowball effect, a higher overall frequency of construction 1 will often result in a higher overall frequency of construction 2, and vice versa. Importantly, the opposite trend may hold as well (provided other factors do not counter this effect): a decline in frequency of construction 1 implies a decrease in occasions that may trigger construction 2, and hence may well lead to a similar decline in the frequency of construction 2, and vice versa. Interestingly, despite being based on such a superficial similarity[6], the effect of structural priming is rather strong and has been shown to have an influence even across different languages. Loebell & Bock (2003: 791), for example, have shown that the production of German double-object (11a) or prepositional (12a) dative sentences primes the subsequent use of structurally similar English datives ((11b) and (12b) respectively) and vice versa, while German (13a) and English (13b) passives, which have a different structure[7], did not prime one another, thus proving that it is the superficial structural likeness which is crucial to the mechanism.[8]

(11a) *Der Junge schickte seinem Brieffreund einen Brief.*

(11b) *The boy sent his pen-pal a letter.*

(12a) *Der Junge schickte einen Brief an seinen Brieffreund.*

(12b) *The boy sent a letter to his pen-pal.*

(13a) *Die Böden werden täglich von dem Hausmeister gereinigt.*

(13b) *The floors are cleaned daily by the janitor.*

A first way in which structural priming effects may lead to a higher frequency of English absolutes is found in the likeness of gerunds (14) and present participles, which both use the *-ing*-suffix. Because of this formal similarity, the frequent use of the *-ing* in gerunds may incite the use of other *ing*-forms, including participles that form part of an absolute construction. Dutch, however, has never had a formally similar gerund in its history, nor is there at present any gerund-like construction available in the language (König 1994: 559). As a result, structural priming through gerunds is not possible in Dutch.

(14) *In many cases the use of new technology has led to the numbers of unemployed and those without land increasing.* (BNC, Bishops' Conference of Scotland, 1993)

Another possible trigger for structural priming of English present participle absolutes through shared use of *-ing* is the use of the English progressive (15). In PDE, the progressive is very frequent and

[6] Pickering & Ferreira (2008) rightly remark that 'much structural priming is unusually abstract, evidently reflecting the repetition of representations that are independent of meaning and sound. This is therefore informative about how people represent and use abstract structure that is not directly grounded in perceptual or conceptual knowledge.'

[7] The fact that in German the past participle of the verb, *gereinigt,* occurs sentence finally, while this is not possible in English, creates the crucial difference in phrase structure.

[8] For additional examples of the role of priming in language change see for example Traugott & Troudale (2013: 73-90) on various priming effects in the development of the *way*-construction and Goldberg (2006: 124) for the priming of passives by locatives with a morphology similar to the passive.

highly grammaticalized (Bertinetto et al. 2000: 517, 527; Johansson 2000: 89), and as such may prime the use of present participle absolutes. In contrast, the Dutch progressive construction [*zijn* present-participle], as in (16) was, even in its heyday, more restricted in use than the English one (e.g. with respect to the types of verbs it could combine with). It never reached the stage of the passive progressive (van der Horst 2008), which appeared in 18th century English (17). After a peak in the 16th century, the Dutch progressive was then gradually replaced by other constructions with the same function but, crucially, without a present participle form[9], such as *liggen* 'lie', *staan* 'stand' or *zitten* 'sit' (+ *te* 'to') + infinitive ((18), (19) and (20) respectively) or the [*aan het* + infinitive] construction (21) (Ebert 2000: 607; Bertinetto et al. 2000: 528). Eventually, with the exception of some fossilized cases (22), the Dutch progressive was lost from the language entirely . Again, this development leads us to conclude that only in English the progressive continues to support, through structural priming, the use of participial *ing*-forms, including present participle absolutes.

(15) *I am thinking about quitting altogether.*

(16) *Het schip is zinkende.*
'The ship is sinking.'

(17) *We have been practicing for hours*.

(18) *Ik stond al uren op jou te wachten.*
'I had been waiting for you for hours already.'

(19) *Anke lag zich stierlijk te vervelen.*
'Anke was bored out of her mind.'

(20) *Ze zat zich op te maken voor de spiegel.*
'She was applying make-up in front of the mirror.'

(21) *De kleuters waren aan het tekenen.*
'The toddlers were drawing.'

(22) *Deze zaak is nog hangende, de beslissing wordt binnenkort genomen.* (ANS)
'This case is still pending, the decision will be made shortly.'

A final candidate for structural priming is the free adjunct, as in (23)-(24), which is very closely related to the present participle absolute. The only differences are the presence of an overtly expressed subject in the absolute construction and the fact that the absolute's subject does not need to be coreferential with the subject of the matrix clause.

(23) *General Lucius Clay was late, bounded up the steps whistling a vague tune*. (TIME, Moscow to Berlin, 1948)

(24) *Uit volle borst marsliederen zingend, kwamen de wandelaars terug*. (ANS)
'Singing marshes at the top of their lungs, the hikers returned.'

When we look at the situation in Dutch and English in the 18th century (Figure 6), it turns out that free adjuncts in Dutch were roughly as frequent as those in English at the time (Fonteyn & Cuyckens

[9] The present participle in Dutch can be recognized by the *-end(e)* ending on the verb.

2013: 169-170). By the 19th century this situation had changed drastically. Free adjuncts in Dutch had become only about half as frequent as they were then in English (Fonteyn & Cuyckens 2013: 169-170). It is likely that this difference has become even bigger in present-day usage. Kortmann's (1995) PDE corpus has a frequency of free adjuncts of 313.8 per 100,000 words, while the frequency of free adjuncts in Dutch has in all likelihood continued to decline. In sum, the English free adjunct is currently a much better 'anchor' for the absolute construction in the language system than is its Dutch counterpart.

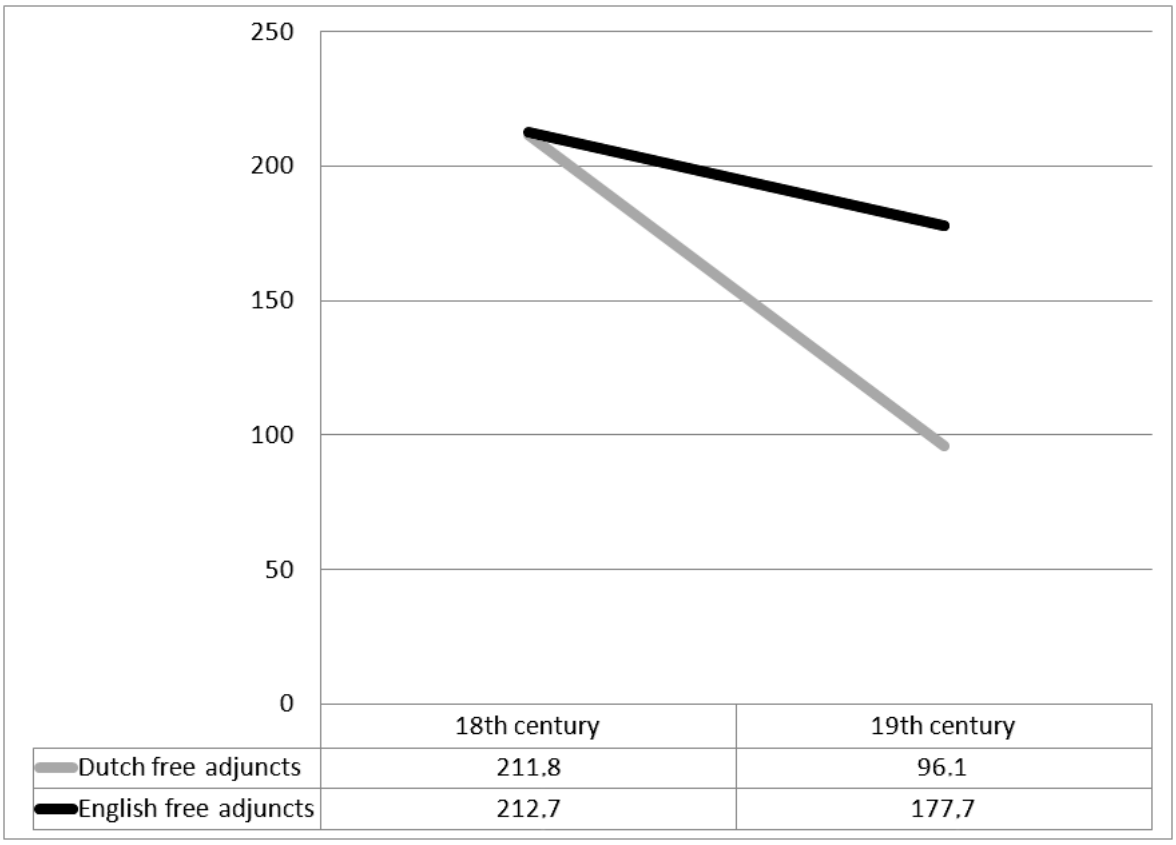

Figure 6: Normalized frequency of free adjuncts in 18th & 19th century Dutch & English. (n = 100,000) (Fonteyn & Cuyckens 2013: 169-170)

The importance of the free adjunct for the survival of the absolute construction is underscored by the observation that cross-linguistically free adjuncts tend to be at the centre of a cluster of participial uses (König & van der Auwera 1990) (Figure 7). The model proposed by König & van der Auwera implies that the viability of other nodes (other uses of participles) in the cluster depends on the availability of a free adjunct in the language system. These nodes are the following: the absolute, the object nexus (25), the predicative use (26) and the attributive/appositional use (27).

(25) *I saw him listening to Turandot the other day*. (König and Van der Auwera 1990: 347)

(26) *Fred was singing in the rain.* (König and Van der Auwera 1990: 347)

(27) *The man standing at the corner is my brother.* (König and Van der Auwera 1990: 347)

The motivation for choosing the free adjunct (or 'adverbial SS use') is that "if we take the adverbial SS use of participles as basic, all other uses can be described as closely related: each of the other uses differs in one property only. Taking any of the other uses as basic would not reveal equally strong

resemblances" (König and Van der Auwera 1990: 347). Their choice for placing the free adjunct at the centre of the participial uses is further corroborated by the fact that, on the basis of the languages they investigated, the following rule could be formulated: "if a language uses participles for one or more of the functions distinguished […], the adverbial SS use will be one of them"(König and Van der Auwera 1990: 347). Most relevant for the present purpose is that the cluster of participial uses, as envisioned by this study, entails that free adjuncts may exist in languages that do not have an absolute (anymore), but that languages are not predicted to use absolutes without also making use of free adjuncts. Put differently, the free adjunct forms a crucial anchor point within the linguistic system without which the absolute cannot maintain its existence. In fact, König and Van der Auwera (1990: 340) formulated the following rule, based on their observation, with an accompanying functional motivation for its occurrence:

> *If a language has both DS [i.e. different subject] and SS [i.e. same subject] constructions and one of these two patterns is somewhat marginal, it is usually the DS patterns that plays a marginal role. It is quite plausible to suspect a functional motivation behind this constraint. Clause-linking via deranking can be seen as an indication that the connection between the clauses in question is stronger than that signaled by mere juxtaposition. And the more two clauses share (in addition to tense, mood) the stronger the connection is likely to be.*

Given this dependence, a steep decline in free adjunct use such as that witnessed in Dutch (Figure 6) is predicted to be reflected in a similar decline in the use of the absolute.

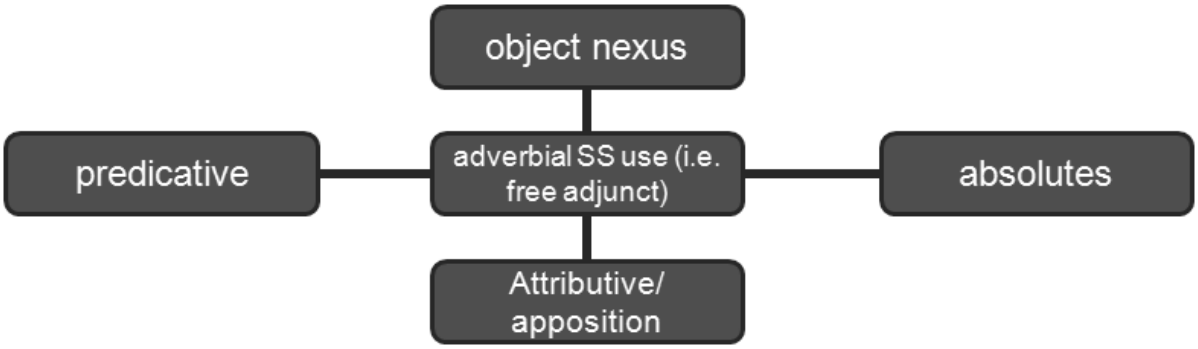

Figure 7: Cluster of participial uses (slightly adapted from König & van der Auwera 1990)

5.3 Functional and formal overlap between absolutes and other constructions

5.3.1 Overlap with gerunds

Structural priming is the process whereby a structure X triggers a similar structure Y. The term is intended to cover such an effect between similar structures largely regardless of a semantic connection between them. In the previous section we have examined the plausibility of such an effect between various structures involving *-ing* in English. However, in our particular case of absolutes, it is possible to go beyond this structural effect, and identify a set of constructions that are simultaneously connected in a network by form and by function through a number of intermediate constructions. Once again, the extent of such stepwise connections appears to be greater in English than it is in Dutch.

Specifically, English absolutes with present participle predicates are found to display a stepwise functional and formal overlap with gerunds. In Dutch, a similar stepwise overlap is lacking. Unlike the formal similarity discussed in the case of structural priming, which works on a more superficial level and is typically an 'online' process taking place during the act of language perception and production, this is a more permanent formal association within the speaker's mental grammar, which crucially also involves an accompanying similarity in syntactic/semantic function. As a result, the formal/functional overlap discussed here also typically results in intermediate stages represented by constructions that are ambiguous between a gerund reading and an absolute reading, as will be exemplified below. Such ambiguity is only possible if there is also functional similarity between both possible readings. In structural priming there need only be formal similarity and both forms do not need to have the same function (compare for example the progressive and the free adjunct). Strictly speaking, this means that the cases of overlap discussed in this section can also support the absolute construction through structural priming, with the structural priming feeding the formal association in the mental grammar and vice versa, but that certainly not all structures that may cause structural priming of the absolute also display formal and functional overlap with the absolute.

The overlap in English between absolutes and gerunds is both functional and formal in nature. It is functional to the extent that both constructions are used to provide additional background information to the matrix clause, which is often adverbial in nature[10]. Formally, the two constructions share the *ing*-form, and they can both have an overt subject in the accusative case. Sentence (28), for example, shows a typical gerund. The genitive subject *my* used in this example underscores the interpretation of the *ing*-form as a noun phrase and blocks any absolute reading. Confusion is not possible in this example. In sentence (29), however, the subject *her* is ambiguous between a genitive and an accusative reading and as a result, it is possible to analyse the structure as an absolute, given that one opts for the accusative interpretation. In sentences (30) and (31), which both have an accusative subject (*me* & *himself* respectively), the ambiguity is strongest, and both an absolute reading and a gerundial reading are equally plausible. The difference between the two is that *with* is a slightly more natural conjunction-like augmentor than is its negative counterpart *without,* which is more like a preposition and more easily invites a gerundial reading. When an introductory preposition is lacking altogether, as in (32), an absolute reading becomes the norm. Indeed, the adverbial function of *himself making man's vocation clear* blocks a reading of this phrase as a gerund, because noun phrases cannot normally occupy an adverbial slot, which can generally only be filled by prepositional phrases and adverbials.

Finally, sentence (33) is an example of a prototypical unaugmented absolute in the nominative case. As the subject of a gerund can only occur in the genitive or the accusative case, a gerundial reading is impossible. Of course, since nominative/accusative case distinctions in English are covert in regular NP subjects, and only show up in pronominal subjects, the amount of overlap between gerunds and present participle absolutes is considerable.

(28) *I don't claim to know that God exists, I only claim that he does <u>without my knowing it,</u> and while I claim as much I do not claim to know as much; indeed i cannot know and God knows I cannot.* (Leuven drama corpus, Jumpers, 1972) (NO absolute, gerund)

[10] Except for gerunds that are being used in subject or object position.

(29) *Life was fraught enough for the Stevenses as it was, with the constant care of Jennifer, without her adding to their problems.* (BNC, False impressions. 1990)

(30) *Nobody walks out of there without me saying, Yes it's good for you.* (BNC, interview, 1991)

(31) *He loved to wake and hear the large house stirring, with himself enfolded in it.* (BNC, Van Gogh: a life, 1990)

(32) *The first part of Gaudium et Spes returns again and again to the theme of Christ, the New Adam who fully reveals man to man, himself making man's vocation clear* (BNC, Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and after 1991)

(33) *… but it had never occurred to her, she being neither proud nor ashamed of it, nor even thinking it very out of the ordinary.* (BNC, King Solomon's carpet, 1992) (prototypical unaugmented absolute)

Dutch never had a gerund (König 1994: 559), and so lacks this anchor for the absolute construction. Again, we find the English absolute in a more privileged position when compared to its Dutch counterpart. Furthermore, since the overlap with the gerund is restricted to *ing*-forms, it is especially the absolute constructions with present participles which will suffer from the absence of overlap with gerunds in Dutch. Combining this evidence with the limited potential for structural priming in Dutch, owing to the loss of the progressive with a present participle by PDD and the decline of the Dutch free adjunct from the 19th century onward, it becomes clear why absolutes with present participles are considerably less common in Dutch than in English (cf. Section 5.1).

5.3.2 Overlap with postmodifiers

Aside from the overlap with gerunds, English absolutes, especially those with prepositional and adverbial predicates also show functional and formal overlap with prepositional postmodifiers. Again, this stepwise overlap is illustrated by some examples representing the various possibilities from clear postmodifiers to typical absolutes (34-37).

In sentence (34), *with a glass panel* clearly represents a standard postmodifier in the form of a prepositional phrase. This example cannot in any way be mistaken for an absolute as it lacks some of its key defining characteristics, such as a clear subject-predicate structure. In example (35), *with a glass panel on top* we do find this subject-predicate structure which is typical of absolutes, but the construction is functionally still a postmodifier. It is part of the noun phrase to which it adds more detail, and the predicate can be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence. In sentence (36), we have the same subject-predicate structure as in (35) but now the construction's function (manner/accompanying circumstance) is also typical of an absolute and the presence of the predicate *to her* is not optional anymore. The sentence would become incomprehensible if the predicate is left out. In sentence (37), finally, the augmentor has been deleted and the underlined constructions represent two prototypical unaugmented absolutes with a prepositional predicate and a manner interpretation.

(34) *He showed us a toy that he had made as a boy: a little square box of painted wood with a glass panel* (NO absolute, prepositional phrase as postmodifier) (adapted from BNC 1991)

(35) *He showed us a toy that he had made as a boy: a little square box of painted wood with a glass panel on top (adapted from BNC 1991)*

(36) *He is downstage, with his back to her* (BNC, 1970)

(37) *They all meet midstage, turn upstage to walk, HAMLET in the middle, arm over each shoulder.* (BNC, 1986) (prototypical unaugmented absolute with prepositional phrase predicate)

In contrast to the overlap between the absolute construction and the gerund, the overlap between the absolute construction and postmodifiers is not limited to English, but is found in the Dutch language system as well. Examples (38)-(41) illustrate this.

(38) *De zwart-wit geblokte gootsteen met de barst*. (NO absolute, prepositional phrase as postmodifier) (adapted from DBNL, 1995)
'The black-and-white chequered sink with the crack.'

(39) *De zwart-wit geblokte gootsteen met de barst in het midden*. (DBNL, 1995)
'The black-and-white chequered sink with the crack in the middle.'

(40) *Obama daarentegen kon rekenen op miljoenen aanwezigen, die met tranen in de ogen getuige waren van de historische eedaflegging.* (DBNL, 2009)
'Obama, on the other hand, could count on millions of onlookers, who, with tears in their eyes, witnessed the historical inauguration.'

(41) *Ik zat net te lezen bij het elektrische kacheltje toen mijn gastheer verscheen, de herder op zijn hielen.* (DBNL, 1994) (prototypical unaugmented absolute with prepositional phrase predicate)
'I had just started reading near the electric stove when my host appeared, the shepherd on his heels.'

Just like the overlap between absolutes and gerunds, this overlap between absolutes and postmodifiers also establishes a connection between the absolute and the rest of the language system, thus making the construction less alien in form and use to the perception of the language user and more likely to survive. In contrast to the situation in English, the Dutch absolute only has the postmodifier as an anchor to which it is connected through overlap. This may explain the markedly higher relative frequency of prepositional and adverbial predicates in the Dutch absolute, as compared to English (cf. Section 5.1 Figure 3). Prepositional and adverbial predicates are precisely the types that tend to show overlap with postmodifiers.

In addition, *with*-augmentation of absolutes shows a marked preference for prepositional predicates: 31% of the *with*-augmented absolutes has this predicate type versus 13% of the unaugmented absolutes in the PDE data. It may be assumed that the overlap with postmodifiers introduced by *with/met* facilitates the use of prepositional predicates in absolutes, which in turn

evoke a higher than average use of augmentation. This may explain why augmentation was shown to be more obligatory in Dutch than in English (cf. Section 5.1 Figure 4). Indeed, whereas in English this tendency is somewhat mitigated by the presence of an additional overlap between absolutes and gerunds, the lack of any other type of overlap in Dutch increases the relative influence of postmodifiers on predicate type selection of absolutes.

6. The status of the absolute construction in other Germanic languages

A final issue that we will now briefly address on the basis of the available literature is to what extent other Germanic languages show similar restrictions on the usage of the absolute as does Dutch, owing to similarities in their linguistic structure. Of the languages investigated, absolute constructions had deteriorated the most in Danish. Just like Dutch, Danish neither possesses a progressive that makes use of the present participle (Ebert 2000: 607; Bertinetto et al. 2000: 528), nor does it have a gerund (König 1994: 559), which might support the absolute's survival through structural priming. The reason why the decline of the absolute is more severe than it is in Dutch is that, in addition to Danish lacking a network of similar constructions, Danish prescriptivism acted vigorously, and apparently very successfully, against all traces of Latin syntactic influence in the language (Killie 2006). Among other things, this prescriptive movement included the promotion of parataxis above hypotaxis. The absolute being mostly hypotactic in nature, such a rule also discouraged the use of this construction.

While Old Norse definitely had an absolute similar to the one found in other older Germanic languages (Bauer 2000: 275), Norwegian was heavily influenced in the 1700s by the very same Danish prescriptivist movement. Consequently, the use of the participle, which lost its verbal properties entirely (Swan 2003), was severely limited in Norwegian (Killie 2006: 452). Just like Danish and Dutch, Norwegian neither possesses a progressive which uses the present participle form (Ebert 2000: 607; Bertinetto et al. 2000: 528), nor does it have a gerund (König 1994: 559, Killie 2006: 466), and therefore it too lacks the possibilities for structural priming that are available in English. It is not surprising that the absolutes we find in the present-day language are almost exclusively those with non-verbal predicate types, as in (42) and (43) – i.e., those that are often connected to postmodifiers.

(42) *Vera satt i det tomme karet, <u>med håndkleet over skuldrene</u>.* (Haff 2010: 209)
'Vera sat in the empty bath, <u>with a towel over the shoulders.</u>'

(43) *Etter middag satt vi sammen <u>met hvert vårt glass.</u>* (Haff 2010: 210)
'After dinner, we sat together <u>with each our glass.</u>'

Swedish again lacks a progressive with a present participle (Ebert 2000: 607; Bertinetto et al. 2000: 528) and a gerund (König 1994: 559). However, Danish prescriptivism did not have the kind of influence on Swedish it had on Norwegian, which put the Swedish absolute in a slightly more favourable position. While its existence is largely ignored in most reference grammars (e.g. Holmes & Hinchliffe 1994), the absolute is not stigmatized in Swedish. The resulting situation is very similar to the one we find for Dutch. Augmentation through the use of augmentor *med* 'with' has just like that with *met* in Dutch become the standard option and the possibility of omitting the augmentor is limited, especially when compared to English (Lundin 2003: 15, 49; Teleman et al. 1999: 695). While verbal predicate types still occur in Swedish (44), it is the non-verbal predicate types that are most

frequently encountered in Swedish too (45). As in Dutch, the overlap with prepositional postmodifiers is clearly present (46).

(44) *Med rosorna klippta kunde han ta sig an gräsmattan* (Lundin 2003: 12)
'With the roses cut, he could see to the lawn.'

(45) *Med ansiktet vitt av ilska anföll Kalle hunägaren.* (Lundin 2003: 146)
'With a face white from anger, Kalle attacked the dog owner.'

(46) *En leksaksbil med ena hjulet av låg vid sängen.* (Lundin 2003: 146)
'A toy car with one wheel off lay by the bed.'

Old High German, finally, had a frequently used dative absolute (Bauer 2000: 275) and until recently (19th century) the absolute was still fairly common in German (König & Van der Auwera 1990: 349; Komen 1994: 103-108). German is also the only Germanic language in which certain types of absolutes with present participles are fully acceptable (47), which arguably makes German, after English, the Germanic language in which the use of absolutes is still the most natural today. Prescriptive rejection of the absolute in German was usually limited to non-coreferential-subject absolutes (Komen 1994: 103-108) with present participle predicates. As a result these absolutes were lost in Present-day German (Kortmann 1988: 67-69). For example, while (48) is possible in English, its German equivalent in (49) is not accepted, as there has to be at least a part-whole relationship between the subject of the absolute construction and the subject of the matrix clause, which is not the case here. As a result, the functional and formal properties of the absolute are more limited than are those of English (Kortmann 1988:69). As is the case in Dutch, German absolutes also mainly survive in uses with non-verbal predicate types (50) (Kortmann 1988: 72; 85). Again, the lack of a gerund-like construction (König 1994: 559) and a progressive with the participle (Ebert 2000: 607; Bertinetto et al. 2000: 528) in combination with a lower frequency of free adjuncts than in English are presumably also for German the cause of this gradual loss of the absolute construction.

(47) *Die beiden Verliebten saßen am Caféhaustisch, ihre Hände sich sanft berührend.*
(Kortmann 1988: 61)
'The two lovers sat at a pub table, their hands gently touching.'

(48) *His mother being a German, John knows all about typical German dishes.* (Kortmann 1988: 61)

(49) **Seine Mutter eine Deutsche seiend, John...*

(50) *Er schlich sich den Korridor entlang, jede seiner Bewegungen vorsichtig und doch elegant, fast katzenartig.* (Kortmann 1988: 67)
'He crept along the corridor, each of his movements careful, yet elegant, almost feline.'

All in all, the other Germanic languages appear to a large extent similar to Dutch in their use of the absolute construction and in the frequency of the absolute, and for the same reasons too, as is represented visually by the schema to the right in Figure 8. Due to less possibilities of overlap between the absolute and the rest of the language system and less incitement for structural priming,

these languages all show distinctively lower frequencies of absolute constructions than English, possess less absolutes with clear verbal characteristics, and have more augmented absolutes. Especially in Norwegian and Danish, the present participle absolute has all but disappeared, as a result of the added influence of sustained prescriptive criticism against the use of absolute constructions.

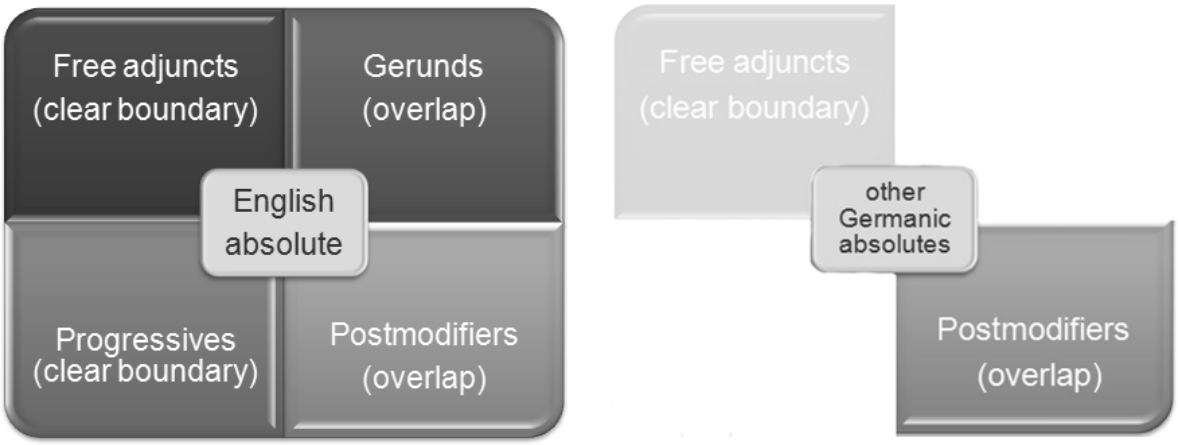

Figure 8: Connections of the absolute with other elements of the linguistic system in English and the other Germanic languages

7. Absolute constructions as further evidence for a typological shift in English

From a theoretical perspective, the different situation in English may further be linked to, and as such provides corroborating evidence for, the recent hypothesis that English underwent a typological shift from strictly bounded construal to a mixture of bounded and unbounded construal (Los 2012). In the case of bounded construal, clauses within a larger whole are construed as self-contained units whose beginnings and/or endings are bounded by structural reference to their surrounding clauses. The partial loss of bounded construal in English can be illustrated by the changes in the way narratives are structured. Old English grammatical structure was conducive to narratives in serial fashion, as if seen through the eyes of a protagonist experiencing events as bounded (one after another) as in (51). This type of narrative structure can be schematically represented as in Figure 9.

(51)*… he caste awai his owen armes, and toke the Armes of a dede Briton, and armede him wiþ his armure, and come into þe bataile to þe kyng, and saide in þis maner: "…* (Innsbruck Prose Corpus, BRUT1, ca. 1400)

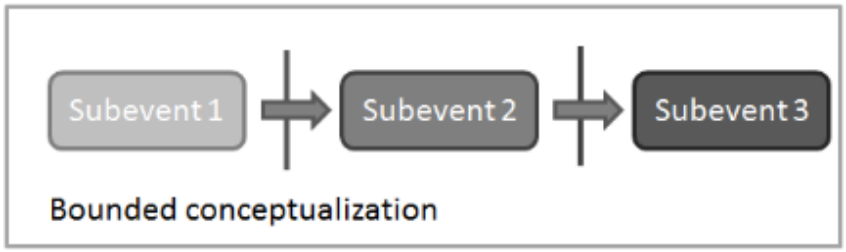

Figure 9: Schematic representation of bounded conceptualization (adapted from Los & Starren 2012)

This type of construal typically has adverbs meaning 'then' at the head of a clause, often with inversion of the subject. In Old English, the most typical adverb fulfilling this bounding function was *þa*. By contrast, Present-Day English grammar provides more room for unbounded narrative, which is similar to a camera overlooking the whole scene, and seeing events as (partly) overlapping (*Water was dripping down. The man started digging and the sand is caving in*); this is represented schematically in Figure 10 (cf. also von Stutterheim et al. 2012).

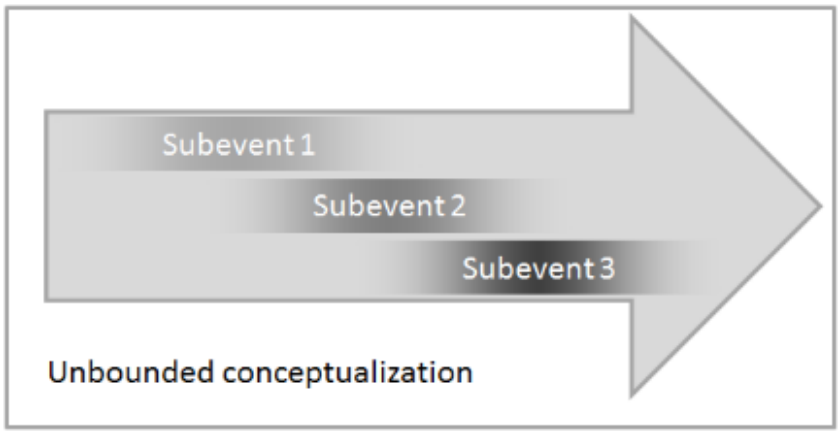

Figure 10: Schematic representation of unbounded conceptualization (adapted from Los & Starren 2012)

The hypothesis that there has been a structural increase in unbounded construal, while still somewhat speculative, seems worth examining, as it allows to relate a number of superficially local and unrelated changes that take place in the English language around the same time. Changes that have been linked to this shift so far have been the loss of verb-second, which is generally considered as the trigger that got everything moving (Los 2009, Los 2012), the decrease of time adverbials in clause-initial position (van Kemenade & Westergaard 2012, Petré 2014), the loss of the copula of change *weorðan* 'become', by its association with verb-second word order (Petré 2010) unusual passives and clefts (Los 2012), or the progressive (Petré *submitted*).

So far, absolute constructions have not yet been drawn into this picture. Yet both the closely related progressive construction (Petré *submitted*) and, admittedly only as a topic for further research, free adjuncts (Fonteyn & Cuyckens 2013) have been linked to the emergence of unbounded construal. Similar to the progressive, the use of the absolute construction emphasizes the co-presence or overlap of multiple events rather than their separation in time. Example (52) illustrates this:

(52) *As depicted in the story, the British military is woefully underprepared for such an invasion and is quickly rolled over, the British Empire falling and the world never knowing the Beatles. Interestingly, the British loved the idea of being invaded by a foreign power, and hundreds of books with similar plots soon flooded the market, each one of them featuring England being invaded by basically every country on the planet.* (http://www.cracked.com/blog/5-wtf-old-timey-sci-fi-genres-that-were-hugely-popular/#ixzz2v5lHNjq9 [accessed 5 March 2014])

While the British Empire has not yet fallen in (52), the events leading up to its fall are already in progress. Construing the same event from a bounded perspective, a finite subordinate clause might be used instead such as *until in the end the British empire fell*. Similarly, the non-emergence of the

Beatles could be construed as a result *following* the invasion of the British Empire, and phrased more likely as *That's why the world never came to know the Beatles*, or in Dutch, using inversion: *Dus leerde de wereld nooit de Beatles kennen* 'So came the world never to know the Beatles'.

Of course overlap between events can be so salient, that it will be present in the verbalization of the event anyhow. Thus, absolute constructions in Dutch generally imply such an overlap, as in (53).

(53) *Alice liep [...]naar binnen, haar kop koffie als schild en wapen tegelijk in haar hand.* (Het Godsdeeltje, 2012)
'Alice entered, (holding) her cup of coffee as both a shield and weapon in her hand. '

Unlike Dutch, however, English seems to opt for unbounded construal also when the situation would allow for two perspectives, as in example (52).

The alternation between bounded and unbounded construal may not only be found in temporally structured texts, where progress in time provides a basis for segmentation. It also occurs in other genres, such as descriptions of spaces (see Carroll & Lambert 2003:169–170) or argumentative texts (see Los 2012). Essentially, spatial adverbials perform a function similar to that of time adverbials, which is also partially bounding, in that they define the topic space, that is, the space within whose boundaries a certain assertion holds. Argumentative prepositional phrases are less transparently bounding structures, but they arguably limit a clause to a certain region in argumentative space. For instance, in argumentative texts from earlier stages of English, XVS often appears when the argument is logically or causally linked to the preceding one, with argumentative adverbs like *þonne* 'then' (given a condition 'when'), *for þy* 'therefore', and so on.
In sum, all the possible fillers of the first position-slot in a verb-second grammar seem to share a function of structuring information, in providing unmarked links to the preceding discourse, locating the present clause in time, space, or argumentative space.

The effects of the loss of verb-second in English may also be perceived in the use of absolute constructions in non-narrative texts, providing additional evidence that English has progressed further in its use of unbounded construal than Dutch. Argumentative linking adverbs decreased in first position (and cf. Lenker 2014 on change in the use and position of linking adverbials in this respect). Strongly adverbial absolute constructions provided a viable alternative by linking two clauses without such an adverb. Such absolute constructions, such as (54), which signals a reason why, continue to increase in English.

(54) *With the traffic thickening and the street lights coming on, it would be after four when I got there.*

By contrast, whereas this type of absolute is not uncommon in Late Modern Dutch, which might have been a period of experimentation with unbounded construal, it drastically drops afterwards, with Dutch seemingly returning to its strong preference for bounded construal instead. To express a line of thought such as that expressed in (54), Dutch would now prefer argumentative adverbs in first position (*De file wordt groter en het wordt donker. Daardoor zal het na vieren zijn eer ik er ben*. 'Traffic is thickening and it's getting dark. Because-of-that shall it be after four when I got there.').

8. Conclusion

Existing literature on absolute constructions suggests that absolute constructions are much more common in PDE than in PDD. The contrastive corpus study we have conducted in this paper has confirmed this. Particularly absolutes with present participles as their predicate, which represent the most widespread type in English, have been found to be very rare in Dutch. In addition to providing a thorough description of current usage in Dutch and English, we have also been able to identify three main reasons for the differences between them.

Firstly, English shows much more potential for structural priming of present participle absolutes than Dutch through its frequent use of present participial free adjuncts, progressives and gerunds. All of these contain the same *ing*-form that is used in the absolute with a present participle. In Dutch, on the other hand, only free adjuncts can serve this function and then only to a lesser extent, because of their lower overall frequency. A future prospect would be to see this hypothesis confirmed by a psycholinguistic study which investigates the proposed priming effects in an experimental setting.

Secondly, the English absolute is connected to other elements of the linguistic system via a dual overlap: one between present participle absolutes and gerunds, and another between absolutes and prepositional postmodifiers. In Dutch, only the latter kind of overlap could be identified. As this type of overlap mostly concerns prepositional predicate absolutes and adverbial predicate absolutes, these absolute types became overrepresented in Dutch when compared to English. This phenomenon is also the reason that augmentation is more obligatory in Dutch than in English.

Finally, there have never been any strong prescriptive sentiments against the use of the absolute in English, and recently some academic writing guides have even started encouraging its use. In contrast, the unaugmented Dutch absolute is dismissed by prescriptive grammar as formal and restricted to idiomatic cases. Only the *met*-augmented absolute is somewhat tolerated in Dutch, which is an additional factor why augmentation is more obligatory in Dutch than in English. With the aid of the available literature on the subject, it was also possible to confirm that the situation encountered in Dutch seems to largely hold for the other Germanic languages as well.

From a theoretical perspective, it has been suggested that the different situation in English provides additional evidence for the hypothesis that English underwent a typological shift towards a higher degree of unbounded construal. Most striking in this respect is its development in tandem with other constructions that have been associated with the rise of unbounded construal. The precise relation between the various constructions involved in this wholesale shift deserves to be looked at more thoroughly in future research.

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