

The Silence of the Words

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CISCL, Università di Siena, March 31 2009

1. Some history

1.1. The neglect of empty words

Every linguist's favorite silent elements:

- traces, PRO, pro
- ellipsis (VPD, N' –ellipsis, Gapping, RNR)
- deletion under identity, haplology (cf. Van Riemsdijk, 2008)
- silent function words (e.g. null-articles)

Silent lexical and semi-lexical words have been neglected.

Do they exist?

- (1)
- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. | John wants a beer | (to drink) |
| b. | Mary enjoyed the movie | (watching) |
| c. | John began a book | (reading, writing, ...) |
| d. | Mary finished the article | (idem, proofreading,...) |
- from Pustejovsky (1995:115)
- (2) Interpret NP as $[_{Activity} F(NP)]$. (i.e. an unspecified activity involving NP, "doing something with NP") (Jackendoff, 1997:61)

A non-syntactic solution is always possible – the important question to ask is whether there is any evidence from syntactic distribution, morphology or some other non-semantic source to argue that there really is a syntactic position "filled" with a silent word.

For example, Dutch Modal + DP

- (3) Jij mag geen bier!
 You may no beer
 'You are not allowed (sc. to drink) beer'

No strong evidence found so far. Cf. also *yes we can!*

1.2. Some strong cases

1.2.1. Silent GO in Germanic (cf. Van Riemsdijk, 2002)

- (4)
- | | | |
|----|--|--------------|
| a. | Du darfst nach hause | German |
| | you may to home | |
| | 'You may <go> home' | |
| b. | Moeten wij nog de stad in? | Dutch |
| | Must we still the town into | |
| | 'Do we still need <to go> to town?' | |
| c. | Si sött aber no in chäller | Swiss German |
| | she should but still into-the cellar | |
| | 'But she should still <go> down into the basement' | |
- (5)
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | ...wil si het müese i d schuel |
| | because she would-have had-to into the school |
| | '...because she should have <gone> to school' |
| b. | ...das mer noni händ döörfe häi |
| | that we not-yet have mayPastParticiple home |
| | '...that we were not allowed to go home yet' |
- (6)
- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | *...wil si het müese gaa ('go') i d schuel |
| b. | *...das mer noni händ döörfe gaa ('go') häi |

(7) Dependents of a verb must always precede that verb, regardless of whether that verb is part of a verb cluster and regardless of whether the dependent in question is in that verb cluster or not. ("Germanic OV Template")

- (8) a. ...wil si het müese i d schuel gaa
 b. ...das mer noni händ döörfe häi gaa

- (9) a. ...wil si het müese i d schuel GAA
 b. ...das mer noni händ döörfe häi GAA

- Right Edge Directionals in Swiss German, Alsatian, Luxemburgish and Afrikaans (*si händ müese häi* 'they have must_{participle} home'), apparently in conflict with the OV-template, is explained via VPR and right peripheral GO: [...AUX – M – PP_{DIR} – [e]_{GO}].

1.2.2. Spurious indefinite articles (SIAs)

- (10) Sono le quattro -- Sono le ore quattro
 are_{PL} the_{PL} four are_{PL} the_{PL} hour_{PL} four
 (Kayne, 2003)

Dutch cases from Van Riemsdijk (2005) – cf. also Leu (2008): *wat voor*, X of a Y, exclamatives. (More about silent N cf. Kayne, 2003, 2005)

- **Wat voor constructions**

- (11) a. Wat voor (een) musea heb je bezocht?
 what for a museums have you visited
 'What kind of museums did you visit?'
 b. Wat heeft Piet voor (een) wijnen uitgezocht?
 what has Pete for a wines selected

'What kind of wines did Pete select?'

In Dutch, overt kind-nouns are sometimes present, as in English.

- (12)a. Wat voor (een) slag meisjes gaan naar die kroeg?
 what for a type girls go to that bar
 'What kind of girls go to that bar?'

- b. Wat voor (een) soort bloemen doen het hier goed?
 what for a sort flowers do it here well
 'What kind of flowers thrive here?'

NB the article with these kind nouns is optional.

- (13) a. Wat voor (een) SOORT musea heb je bezocht?
 b. Wat heeft Piet voor (een) SOORT wijnen uitgezocht?

Ambiguity. (11a/b) allow two kinds of answers.

- (14) a. Wat voor (een)_A/*een_B musea heb je bezocht?
 what for (a) museums have you visited
 'What kind of museums did you visit?'
 A. Musea voor moderne kunst ('museums of modern art')
 B. Het Rijksmuseum en het Van Gogh museum ('the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh museum')
 b. Wat heeft Piet voor (een)_A/*een_B wijnen uitgezocht?
 what has Pete for (a) wines selected
 'What kinds of wines did Pete select?'
 A. Rode en witte Bordeauxwijnen ('red and white Bordeaux wines')
 B. De Cos d'Estournel van 1947 en de Château d'Yquem van 1970

That is, these questions can either ask for a TYPE or for a LIST (an intensional or an extensional characterization (cf. Pafel, 1996)). Instead of LIST: TOKEN(S). The TOKEN(S) interpretation is only possible when the SIA is absent. **If TOKENS is truly a plural, this is exactly what we expect since the indefinite plural article is null.** Where a singular is plausible, e.g. when the 2nd noun is a singular and interpretable both as mass or as a count, TOKEN would be expected to trigger the SIA, and it does.

(15) Wat heeft Piet voor een wijns_{SG} uitgezocht?

- A. Rode Bordeaux
- B. De Cos d'Estournel van 1947

- **N-of-an-N constructions**

- (16) a. een pracht van een gladiolen
a splendor of a gladioli
'splendid gladioli'
- b. die smeerbeol van een olijfolie
that muck of a olive-oil
'that filthy olive oil'
- c. dat juweel van een Fuji
that jewel of a Fuji
'that brilliant Mount Fuji'

TYPE and TOKEN could be involved here as well given SIA (cf. (113a)). Following Matushansky (2002) the N1-of-an-N2 construction is largely base generated, N2 is the semantic head and N1 is a **scalar emotive modifier**, used to express the mood or feeling of the speaker rather than a judgment. The modifier undergoes DP-internal operator movement, like APs sometimes do, as in (2).

(2) More capable a sorceress Miranda has never met

(17) a. een pracht van een TYPE gladiolen

- b. die smeerbeol van een TYPE olijfolie
- c. dat juweel van een BERG Fuji

Some elements of the category Classifier, a set of semi-lexical nouns (cf. Corver & Van Riemsdijk (2001)), are silent.

- **exclamatives**

- (18) a. Wat heeft die auto een deuken!
what has that car a dents
'What dents that car has!'
- b. Wat een deuken heeft die auto!
- c. Een deuken dat die auto heeft!
- d. Die auto heeft een deuken!

Variation caused by two binary variables (modulo intonation patterns):

- the exclamative operator is overt (*wat*) or covert (OP)
- the rest of the exclamative XP is/is not pied-piped

Consistent ambiguity. The exclamation is not about the fact that this car has dents as such, but it is either about the number of dents or about the type of the dents. In the former case, we exclaim about the relatively large number of dents in the second about some relatively excessive property of the dents, for example their large size or perhaps the (high) degree of deformation or destruction.

- **A tentative analysis**

(19) wat voor

- a. [_{DP} wat voor [[_{D°} (een)] [[_n TYPE] N°]]]
- b. [_{DP} wat voor [[_{D°} (een)/∅] [[_n TOKEN(S)] N°]]]

(20) exclamatives

- a. !!!.....[DP [[D° (een)] [[n TYPE] N°]]]
- b. !!!.....[DP [[D° Ø] [n NUMBER [n TOKENS] N°]]]

(21) N-van-eeen-N

- a. ♥...[DP [_{Spec,DP} [_{PPj} [DP D N1] [P° van] [e_i] [D°(een)]] [[_{PP} e_j] [[n TYPE] N2]]]]
- b. ♥...[DP [_{Spec,DP} [_{PPj} [DP D N1] [P° van] [e_i] [D° Ø] [[_{PP} e_j] [NUMBER [[n TOKENS] N2]]]]]]

2. Some general issues

2.1. Silent words ≠ phonetically realized counterparts

No source:

- (22) a. Jan kan zijn werk niet aan
Jan can his work not on
'Jan cannot cope with his work'
- b. *Jan kan zijn werk niet aan gaan

No goal:

- (23) a. Jan zal af gaan
Jan will off go
'Jan will fail miserably'
- b. *Jan zal af

Meaning / collocation difference:

- (24) a. Het pistool moet af gaan
the pistol must go off
'The gun must fire'

- b. Het pistool moet af
the pistol must off
'The pistol must be finished'

Ergo: silent verbs (and nouns) are lexical entries sui generis, with their own properties, and cannot be derived from phonetically realized counterparts by PF-deletion.

2.2. Licensing, adjacency, parameters

- (25) [e]_{+V, +DIR} must be licensed by M
- (26) Swiss German: [M licenses [GAA]P(hrase)]_{Verb Cluster}
Dutch: [M licenses [GAAN]^o]_{Verb Cluster}
- (27) Association: [a @ Hi]_Δ
- (28) The Projection Parameter
a. P-Association: [a @ H[-MAX]]_Δ notation: @P
b. H-Association: [a @ H[-PROJ]]_Δ notation: @H

(29)

type	languages	V(P)R (reanalysis)	licensing of empty light motion verb
SG	Swiss German, Alsatian, Luxemburgish, Afrikaans	@P	@P
WF	West Flemish	@P	@H
DG	Dutch, German	@H	@H

2.3. Top-down and bottom-up licensing

Top-down: Modals licensing a silent motion verb, as in the paradigm cases of Dutch, German, Swiss German etc.

Bottom-up:

- AUX (HAVE) deletion in Scandinavian (den Besten, 1989)

- (30)
- a. Han *(hade) inte sett henne
he had not seen her
 - b. Jag tror (att) han inte (hade) sett henne
I believe that he not had seen her
 - c. Han skulle (ha) sett henne
he should have seen her

- AUX (BE) deletion in South Slavic (Breitbarth, 2002)

- (31)
- a. Jovan *(je) otišao u prodavnicu
John is gone to shop
 - b. Otišao (*je) Jovan u prodavnicu

- Passive AUX (*geworden*) deletion in Dutch

- (32)
- a. De computer *(wordt) morgen geïnstalleerd
the computer is tomorrow installed
'The computer is (will be) installed tomorrow'
 - b. De computer is gisterend geïnstalleerd (*#geworden)
the computer was yesterday installed
'The computer was installed yesterday'

- c. Geïnstalleerd is de computer pas gisteren (*#geworden)
installed was the computer only yesterday
- d. De computer zal pas morgen *(worden) geïnstalleerd
- e. De computer zal pas morgen geïnstalleerd *(worden)

2.4. Feeding and bleeding relationships

- movement of the licensee away from its licenser or licensing environment results in ungrammaticality (undeletability); example: Swedish *ha* after having undergone V2 cannot be silent — *bleeding*;
- movement of the licensee to a licenser may result in deletability; example: resumptive pronouns cliticized to C° in Swiss German relatives — *feeding*; (cf. Van Riemsdijk, 2008);
- movement of a licenser to a licensee may result in deletability; example: participle fronting in Serbo-Croatian may permit the auxiliary clitic to be empty — *feeding*;
- movement of a licenser away from the licensee does not result in ungrammaticality/undeletability; example: GO-licensing by a modal verb M that is fronted under V2 — *no bleeding*.

In short: *the basic licensing relation is between (some link in) the Licenser Chain and the head of the Licensee Chain.*

3. The morphology of silent words

3.1. No non-finite forms

(33) Jan wil de stad in GAAN
 Jan wants the city into
 'Jan wants to go to the center of the town'

(34) a. Jan gaat de stad in
 Jan goes the city into
 'Jan is going to the center of the town'

b. *Jan GAAT de stad in

3.2. Silent inflected forms: defective paradigms

(35) Jan is de stad in vs. De Hans isch i d stad
 Jan is the city into the Hans is into the city
 'Jan is into town' 'Hans went/has gone downtown'

(36) a. Jan is de stad in gegaan (perfective: he is there now)
 b. De Hans isch i d stad ggange (perfective or imperfective)

NB Swiss German does not have a preterit form, the composite past does double duty. Assuming participle deletion (GEGAAN vs. GGANGE), the differences follow from independent properties of the two languages in question. Licensing is, presumably by the directional PP.

3.3. Silent morpheme combinations

(37) Jan is fan doel [om [nei Grins ta]_{PP} [e]_V]_{IP/CP}
 Jan is of plan for to Groningen to
 lit: John is planning (for) to Groningen
 'John is planning to go to Groningen'

Note that *nei Grins ta* is a circumpositional PP, the infinitival marker *te* is elliptic as well: <TE GEAN>. Note that Frisian has GEAN-ellipsis with modals like Dutch.

3.4. Compatibility with particles

- (38) a. Jan kan zijn werk niet aan
 Jan can his work not on
 'John cannot cope with his work'
- b. Hij durft de halve marathon al lang niet meer aan
 he dares the half marathon already long not more on
 'He has not dared to <do/run> the half mar. for a long time'
- c. De open haard hoeft nog niet aan
 the open fireplace need yet not on

Wearing clothes:

- (39) a. Mag ik jouw jas aan?
 may I your coat on
 'Can I wear (borrow) your coat?'
- b. Hij kan jouw jas niet aan
 he can your coat not on
 'He cannot wear your coat' or 'Your coat does not fit him'
- c. Nu moet ik die vervelende smoking weer aan
 now must I that stupid tuxedo again on
 'Now I'll have to wear that stupid tuxedo again'
- d. Moet je dan ook de hoge hoed op?
 must you then also the high hat on?
 'Do you then also have to wear the top hat?'

Food/drink ingestion:

- (40) a. Ik kan wel drie pannenkoeken op
I can so three pancakes up
'I can manage <to eat> as much as three pancakes'
- b. De spruitjes moeten allemaal op
the Brussels-sprouts must all up
'The Brussels sprouts must all <be eaten> up'

Silent small clause heads:

- (41) a. De open haard is aan
the open fireplace is on
'The fireplace is going'
- b. Wij hebben de open haard aan
we have the open fireplace on
'We have the fireplace going'
- (42) a. De spruitjes zijn op
the Brussels-sprouts are up
'The Brussels sprouts are gone/finished'
- b. Ik heb al drie pannenkoeken op
I have already three pancakes up
'I have already eaten three pancakes'

NB Swiss German completely lacks silent particle verbs:

- (43) a. *Döörf ich diin Mantel aa? (≈33a)
b. *S schminee isch aa / ii (≈35a)
c. *D roosechööl sind uuf (≈36a)

Explanation: the difference has to do with another difference: particles distribute differently in verb clusters in the two languages.

- (44) a. ...omdat Jan zijn tijd anders in deelt
because Jan his time differently in divides
'...because Jan distributes his time differently'
- b. Jan deelt zijn tijd anders in
Jan divides his time differently in
'Jan distributes his time differently'
- (45) a. ...dat hij haar **op** kan hebben gebeld
that he her up can have called
'...that he can have called her up'
- b. ?...dat hij haar kan **op** hebben gebeld
- c.dat hij haar kan hebben **op** gebeld
- d. *...dat hij haar kan hebben gebeld **op**
- (46) a. *...das er sini ziit anderscht **ii** het müese täile
that he his time differently in would-have must divide
'...that he should have distributed his time differently'
- b. *...das er sini ziit anderscht het **ii** müese täile
- c.das er sini ziit anderscht het müese **ii** täile
- d. *...das er sini ziit anderscht het müese täile **ii**
- A silent verb root cannot host a verbal prefix (particle, preverb) in Germanic
- Dutch particles (preverbs) can climb, Swiss German ones cannot (related to the projection parameter (28)?) – alternatively: particles must be hosted by the selecting verb in Swiss German, but in Dutch can be hosted by any verb cluster headed by that verb

- (47) a. ...dat Jan deze hoed niet **op** had gemogen ZETTEN
 that Jan this hat not up would-have may put
 '...that Jan should not have been allowed to put on this hat'
 b.dat Jan deze hoed niet had **op** gemogen ZETTEN
 c. *...dat Jan deze hoed niet had gemogen **op** ZETTEN
 d. *...dat Jan deze hoed niet had gemogen ZETTEN **op**
- (48) a. *...das de Hans dëë huet nöd **uuf** het döörfe SETZE
 that the Hans this hat not up woul-have may put
 '...that Hans should not have been allowed to put on this hat'
 b. *...das de Hans dëë huet nöd het **uuf** döörfe SETZE
 c. *...das de Hans dëë huet nöd het döörfe **uuf** SETZE
 d. *...das de Hans dëë huet nöd het döörfe SETZE **uuf**

3.5. The morphological valency of silent words

In Germanic: very limited

- silent words cannot be inflected
- silent words cannot host prefixes
- inflected silent words constitute independent defective lexical entries; sometimes, though, they can have more than one value for certain features, e.g. they can sometimes be singular or plural (cf. (19b))
- the infinitive marker (*te*) in Dutch is on a par with verbal particles in Swiss German: must be hosted by the verb, but if the verb is silent there is no possible output; the infinitival marker in Frisian, from this perspective, need not be hosted and its silence is licensed also by the directional PP

- Languages with much richer morphology such as Nimboran are quite different from Germanic in that verb stems may be silent inside morphologically complex verbs, most likely licensed by a particle-like bound morpheme.

(49)

Root	Particle	Gloss	Restrictions
∅-	-ta [+A]-*	'be present'	Subj=Sg.3n; -Iter
∅-	-rár-	'bring'	+Dir
∅-	-rár-	'dream (of)'	-Dir
∅-	-tam [+A]-*	'kiss'	Subj=Sg
∅-	-rá-	'laugh'	+Iter
∅-	-tár-*	'make cat's cradles'	-Dir
∅-	[+A]	'say to'	Subj=Pl; +Iter

(50)

∅ – rár – ñkát – u → [rekátu]
 laugh – Part – Iter – Pres - 1
 'I laugh repeatedly (here)'

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