“Hij wil wel, maar hij kan niet”:
Modals without complements in Dutch

Lobke Aelbrecht
KUB/Brussels
lobke.aelbrecht@kubrussel.ac.be

OUTLINE OF THE TALK

1 Introduction
2 The basic data: restrictions
3 A comparison with VP ellipsis in English
4 Z’en duut: proforms
5 More on the restriction to deontic modals
6 Conclusion

1 INTRODUCTION

Some Dutch auxiliaries do not always require a complement when there is a contextually salient antecedent → reminiscent of English VP ellipsis

1) A: Wie wil er meerijden naar het strand morgen?
   who wants there with drive to the beach tomorrow
   B: Ik kan niet.
   I can not
   “Who wants to drive along to the beach tomorrow” – “I can’t.”

! However: Dutch doesn’t have VP ellipsis (among others Lobeck 1995)

→ main claim: Dutch modals can select a null VP proform as their complement

2 THE BASIC DATA: RESTRICTIONS

Overview:
2.1 Only modals
2.2 Only deontic modals
2.3 Summary

2.1 Only modals

Willen ‘want’

(2) A: Komt Thomas ook naar je lezing?
   comes Thomas also to your talk
   B: Hij wil niet.
   he wants not
   “Is Thomas coming to your talk too?” – “He doesn’t want to.”

Moeten ‘must/have to’

(3) A: Komt Thomas ook naar je lezing?
   comes Thomas also to your talk
   B: Hij moet.
   he has to
   “Is Thomas coming to your talk too?” – “He has to.”

Mogen ‘be allowed to’

(4) A: Rij je morgen mee naar het strand?
   drive you tomorrow with to the beach
   B: Ik mag niet.
   I may not
   “Are you driving along to the beach tomorrow?” – “I am not allowed to.”

Kunnen ‘can’
(5) A: Wie doet er vanavond de afwas?
    Who does there tonight the dishes
B: Ik kan niet.
    I can not
“Who is doing the dishes tonight?” – “I can’t.”

3 Hoeven ‘need’

(6) A: Komt Thomas ook naar je lezing?
    comes Thomas also to your talk
B: Hij hoeft niet
    he needs not
“Is Thomas coming to your talk too?” – “He doesn’t need to.”

6 Zullen ‘shall/will’

(7) A: Komt Thomas ook naar je lezing?
    comes Thomas also to your talk
B: *Hij zal niet
    he will not

7 Zijn ‘be’

(8) A: Is Thomas ook naar je lezing gekomen?
    is Thomas also to your talk come.part
B: *Hij is niet
    he is not

9 Hebben ‘have’

(9) A: Heeft Katrien gisteren gebeld?
    has Kartien yesterday called
B: *Ze heeft niet
    she has not

→ only real modal verbs, no aspectual auxiliaries

2.2 Only deontic modals

Modals can have 2 interpretations: deontic and epistemic

(10) Om acht uur moet Klaas thuis zijn.
    at eight hour must Klaas at.home be
a. “At 8 Klaas is obliged to be home.” = deontic
b. “At 8 it must be the case that Klaas is at home.” = epistemic

→ without complement:

1 deontic

(11) A: Werk je morgen?
    Work you tomorrow
B: Ik moet wel. Ik heb een lezing volgende week.
    I must PRT I have a talk next week
“Are you working tomorrow?” – “I have to. I am giving a talk next week.”

3 epistemic

(12) A: Werkt Klaas morgen?
    Works Klaas tomorrow
B: *Hij moet wel. Hij werkt altijd op zaterdag.
    he must PRT he works always on Saturday

→ only a deontic reading is compatible with a null complement
2.3. Summary

Some auxiliaries in Dutch can occur without a complement, but not all:

✓ kunnen ‘can’ ⇔ * zullen ‘will’
willen ‘want’ ⇔ * zijn ‘be’
mogen ‘be allowed’ ⇔ hebben ‘have’
moeten ‘have to’ ⇔ hoeven ‘need’

⇒ only deontic modal verbs are allowed to have a null complement

3. A comparison with VP ellipsis in English

Overview:
3.1 VPE = deletion of a full syntactic structure
3.2 No syntactic structure in modal complement
3.3 The analysis: a null VP proform

3.1 VPE = deletion of a full syntactic structure


**English VP ellipsis (VPE) = deletion of a full syntactic structure**

(13) Mina didn’t eat the banana, but Peter did [VP eat the banana].

(14)

⇒ 4 arguments:

- Arguments may survive the ellipsis (= Pseudo-gapping):

(15) Mina lit a cigar and Peter did a cigarette.
Explanation: the object is moved out of the VP prior to the deletion (Johnson 1996; Lasnik 1999a, 1999b, 2001)

(16) Mina lit a cigar and Peter did a cigarette [\text{light a cigarette}]

Notes: Wh-phrases may extract out of an elided VP (cf. Schuyler 2002, Merchant to appear)

(17) Mina ate a banana, but I don’t know what Peter did.

Explanation: the wh-word is moved out of the VP prior to the deletion

(18) Mina ate a banana, but I don’t know what Peter did [\text{eat a banana}].

Notes: An elided VP can have a there-expletive as its subject (Ross 1969):

(19) Mina thought there to be an elephant in the garden, but there seemed not to.

Explanation: there is licensed by an indefinite DP of in the elided VP

(20) Mina thought there to be an elephant in the garden, but \text{there} seemed not to [\text{there be an elephant in the garden}].

Notes: VPE allows antecedent-contained deletion (ACD)

(21) Mina reads each book that Peter does.

Explanation: the quantifier each in the antecedent is coindexed with an operator in the elided VP

(22) Mina reads each, book \text{Op}, that Peter does [\text{read \text{Op} book}].

Notes: VP ellipsis in English involves deletion of a fully specified syntactic VP structure

3.2 No syntactic structure in null modal complements (NMC)

Dutch modals with a null complement: different results for these 4 tests

Notes: They do not allow for pseudo-gapping:

(23) A: Wie doet vanavond de afwas?
    who does tonight the dishes
    B: * Ik kan niet, maar ik wil wel \text{de was}.
    I can not but I want PRT the laundry

! However: adjuncts can optionally survive the ellipsis

(24) A: Wie doet vanavond de afwas?
    who does tonight the dishes
    “Who wants to do the dishes tonight?”
    B: Ik wil wel, maar niet vanavond.
    I want PRT but not tonight
    “I want to (do the dishes), but not tonight.”
    B’: Ik wil wel.
    I want PRT
    “I want to (do the dishes tonight).”

Notes: Object wh-extraction is disallowed:

(25) A: Aan wie moet Katrien een cadeautje geven?
    to who must Katrien a present give
    B: * Dat weet ik niet. Aan wie moet Bert?
    that know I not to who must Bert
However: subject wh-extraction is allowed

(26) Iemand moet straks de afwas doen. Wie kan?
    someone must later the dishes do who can
    “Someone has to do the dishes later today. Who can do that?”

The subject of a modal without complement cannot be a there-expletive

(27) A: Moeten er veel mensen naar de vergadering komen?
    must there a lot of people to the meeting come
    B:* Nee, er moeten niet.
        no there must not

Antecedent-contained deletion (ACD) is ungrammatical with modals

(28) * Joris leest elk boek dat Monika niet wil.
    Joris reads each book that Monika not wants

Null modal complements (NMC) do not involve deletion of a fully specified syntactic VP structure

3.3 The analysis: a null VP proform

VPE: deletion of a fully-fledged syntactic VP structure

modals with empty complement: no syntactic specified complement, but a null VP proform

(29) Ik wil wel komen vanavond, maar ik kan niet.
    I want come tonight but I can not
    “I want to come tonight, but I can’t.”
4 Z’en duut: proforms

Short Do Replies (SDR) in Dutch dialects (see Ryckeboer 1986, 1998):

(31) A: Sofie zie Pieter geirn.
   Sofie sees Pieter gladly
   B: Z’en duut.
      she.NEG does
   “Sofie loves Pieter.” – “No, she doesn’t.”

(32) A: Sofie zie Pieter nie geirn.
   Sofie sees Pieter not gladly
   B: Ze duut
      she does
   “Sofie doesn’t love Pieter.” – “Yes, she does.”

Van Craenenbroeck (2004): SDR do not involve deletion of a full syntactic structure → they involve a null clausal proform

Overview:

4.1 Z’en duut vs. VPE: no syntactic structure in SDR
4.2 Two proform types
4.3 Summary

4.1 Z’en duut vs. VPE: no syntactic structure in SDR (Van Craenenbroeck 2004)

• Unlike VPE, SDR do not involve deletion of a full syntactic structure: 4 tests

1 They do not allow for pseudo-gapping:

(34) A: Pieter zie Sofie geirn.
   Pieter sees Sofie gladly
   B: *Mo j en duu Jessica.
      but he NEG does Jessica
   [Wambeek Dutch]

   INTENDED READING: “Pieter loves Sofie.” – “But he doesn't Jessica.”

   Explanation: pro does not contain any internal structure, so nothing can be moved out of it

2 Both subject and object wh-extraction are disallowed:

(35) A: Ik weet wou da Sofie geire ziet.
   I know who that Sofie gladly sees
   B: *En wou en duu-se?
      and who NEG does.she
   [Wambeek Dutch]

   INTENDED READING: “I know who Sofie loves.” – “And who doesn't she?”

(36) A: Ik weet wou da Sofie geire ziet.
   I know who that Sofie gladly sees
   B: *En wou en duut?
      and who NEG does
   [Wambeek Dutch]

   INTENDED READING: “I know who loves Sofie.” – “Who doesn't?”
**Explanation:** pro does not contain any internal structure, so nothing can be moved out of it

The subject of a Short Do Reply cannot be a *there*-expletive

(37) A: *Dui stonj drou mann inn of.
There stand\textsubscript{pl} three men in the garden
B: a.* Dui en doenj.
There NEG do\textsubscript{pl}
b.* Dui en duut.
There NEG does

**Explanation:** *there* is only licensed by an indefinite DP lower in the structure, but SDR-proforms do not contain lower internal structure

Antecedent-contained deletion (ACD) with SDR is ungrammatical

(38) *Pieter leest elk boek da Sofie duut
Pieter reads each book that Sofie does

**Explanation:** *i*-within-*i* filter violation (Chomsky 1981)

(39) *Pieter [leest elk boek da Sofie duut pro, ]
= parallel to (40)

(40) *I saw [every portrait of it, ]

⇒ Van Craenenbroeck (2004): SDR does not involve a fully-fledged deleted syntactic structure, but a structureless clausal proform

### 4.2 Two proform types

⇒ More differences between VPE and SDR:

* Do in VPE can occur in the past tense, *daut* in SDR cannot.

   b.* No, he doesn’t.

(42) A: Sofie zag Pieter geirn.
    Sofie saw Pieter gladly
   B: a.* Z’en deel she,NEG did
   b. Z’en duut she,NEG does

   “Sofie loved Pieter.” – “No, she didn’t.”

**Explanation:** SDR-proform replaces whole TP, including Tense ⇒ default tense

⇒ A modal with a null complement can occur in the past tense

    has Klaas really worked yesterday he must.pst PRT

   “Did Klaas really work yesterday?” – “He had to.”

**Explanation:** only VP, which does not contain tense, is null

⇒ VPE can co-occur with adverbs, while SDR cannot:

(44) A: Julia will come tomorrow. – B: No, she probably won’t.

(45) A: Sofie kom mergen.
    Sofie comes tomorrow
   B: *Z’en duu wuirschaainlek.
   she,NEG does probably

**Explanation:** proform replaces whole TP, including the adverbs in it
Modals can co-occur with adverbs

comes Sam tonight no he can probably not
“Is Sam coming tonight?” – “No, he probably can’t.”

Explanation: adverbs can occur higher than the null VP

Subject restrictions:
- no restrictions for VPE: it allows proper names, universal quantifiers, weak and strong pronouns...
- severe restrictions for SDR: only weak pronouns that are coreferential with the subject of the antecedent clause

b. B: Everybody does.

(48) a. A: Pieter zie Sofie geirn. – B:* Mo Jef en duut.
Pieter sees Sofie gladly. but Jef NEG does
INTENDED READING: “Pieter loves Sofie.” – “But Jeff doesn’t.”
b. A: Pieter zie Sofie geirn. – B:* Iederiejn duut.

Explanation: in SDR the subject has to be base-generated in [spec, Agr_S]P and only a weak pronoun that is contextually given can be base-generated there.

No subject restrictions with null modal complements

(49) Ik dacht dat er veel mensen zouden komen vanavond,
I thought that there a lot of people would come tonight
maar niemand kan.
but nobody can
“I thought a lot of people would come tonight, but nobody can make it.”

Explanation: the base position of the subject is higher than the null VP

NMC are null VP proforms: they replace the VP complement of the modal

4.3 Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VP ellipsis</th>
<th>NMC</th>
<th>SDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-gapping</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There-expletives</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object wh-extraction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject wh-extraction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbials</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject restrictions</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NMC differs from both VPE and SDR:
- in VPE there is deletion of a fully specified VP with internal structure, while in NMC there is not (parallel to SDR)
- in SDR the proform replaces a whole clausal structure (i.e. TP), while in NMC the proform is a smaller part, namely VP.
5 MORE ON THE RESTRICTION TO DEONTIC MODALS

• Only deontic modals can select a VP proform as their complement.

Explanation: deontic modals are less restricted in the choice of their complement than auxiliaries and epistemic modals (Barbiers 1996). Next to VPs some deontic modals can select:

1. an NP

(50) a. Stijn wil een puppy.
   “Stijn wants a puppy.”
   b. Stijn moet een puppy.
   “Stijn has to have a puppy.”
   c. Stijn mag een puppy.
   “Stijn is allowed to have a puppy.”
   d. Stijn hoeft geen puppy.
   “Stijn doesn’t need to have a puppy.”

(51) a. Stijn moet een puppy.
   “Stijn has to have a puppy.”
   b. * Stijn zal een puppy.
   “Stijn is allowed to have a puppy.”

2. an AdvP

(52) a. Ik wil naar huis.
   “I want to go home.”
   b. Ik moet naar huis.
   “I have to go home.”

(53) a. Ik moet naar huis.”
   “I must to house
   #“It must be the case that I go home.”
   b. * Ik zal naar huis.
   “I can to house
   “I can go home.”

3. a PP

(54) a. Ik wil weg.
   “I want away
   “I want to go away.”
   b. Ik moet weg.
   “I have to go away.”
   c. Ik mag weg.
   “I am allowed to go away.”
   d. Ik hoeft niet weg.
   “I don’t need to go away.”
   e. Ik kan weg.
   “I can away
   “I can go away.”
(55) a. Ik moet weg.
  I must away
  "It must be the case that I am away."
b.* Ik zal weg.
  I will away

6 Conclusion

Deontic modal verbs in Dutch can select a null VP proform as their complement

Sentences with null modal complements (NMC) differ from VP ellipsis in 4 aspects:
- they do not allow pseudo-gapping
- they do not allow object wh-extraction
- they do not allow a there-expletive as their subject
- they do not allow Antecedent Contained Deletion (ACD)

The properties listed in 2 are the same as the ones we find in Short Do Replies in Dutch, which are analyzed as containing a structureless clausal (TP) proform. NMC differ from SDR in the kind of proform: the one in NMC is a VP proform.

The fact that modals can select a null VP proform is reflected in their less restricted selectional requirements in general.

References


