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Features and Projections

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Chapter 5

INFL, COMP and Nominative Case
Assignment in Flemish Infinitivals

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0. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTENT OF INFL AND COMP

It is clear from the introduction to this volume that the feature content of both major and minor syntactic categories remains problematic. This paper concentrates on some of the properties of COMP and INFL, and their specification for $[\pm \text{Tense}]$ and $[\pm \text{AGR}]$.*

It is quite obvious that there is a correlation between the specification of INFL in terms of $[\pm \text{Tense}]$ and $[\pm \text{AGR}]$, and the content of COMP. In English, for example, finite clauses have INFL specified positively for both Tense and AGR, and they take the complementiser *that* if their COMP is $[-\text{WH}]$. Non-finite clauses are usually treated as $[-\text{Tense}, -\text{AGR}]$, and if specified further as $[-\text{WH}]$, they take the complementiser *for*. The correlation between INFL and COMP is taken to be more direct in Verb Second languages such as Dutch and German, where it is often assumed that COMP and INFL coincide (cf. the introduction to this volume and references cited there). Indeed, certain Dutch and German dialects offer direct evidence for such a position, since the complementiser may be inflected (cf. Bennis & Haegeman 1983, Haegeman 1984).

If we assume that INFL contains at least two components (i) Tense and (ii) AGR, which may be specified positively or negatively, there are in principle four possible combinations:

- (a) $[+ \text{Tense}, +\text{AGR}]$
- (b) $[+ \text{Tense}, -\text{AGR}]$
- (c) $[- \text{Tense}, +\text{AGR}]$
- (d) $[- \text{Tense}, -\text{AGR}]$

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(a) above can be taken to represent finite tensed clauses; (d) may be the INFL of pure infinitivals. The contrast between (a) and (d) may also be related to two other areas of the grammar. Firstly, we may argue that in (a) INFL may be held responsible for Nominative Case assignment to the subject: either by virtue of its being [+Tense] (cf. the position of Chomsky 1980) or of its being [+AGR] (cf. Chomsky 1981). If INFL is [-Tense, -AGR], then the subject of the clause cannot be assigned Nominative Case. If such a subject is at all lexically realized, Case will have to be assigned by some other device (so-called 'exceptional Case marking').

Secondly, finite clauses do not allow a PRO subject, since INFL, being positively specified, will govern the subject position; non-finite clauses with INFL specified as in (d) will allow PRO in subject position, provided of course that there is no governor from outside, since INFL, being only negatively specified, will not govern (cf. the introduction to this volume).

The combination of specifications under (c) [-Tense] and [+AGR] is a marked option, to be found, for example, in Portuguese inflected infinitives. If [+AGR] can assign Nominative case, such infinitival clauses can have a lexical nominative subject. (cf. Koopman 1984, though, for a different view on Nominative Case assignment).

The pattern given under (b), where INFL is [+Tense, -AGR], is rarely discussed in the literature. One proposal that may be integrated under such a specification is the treatment of infinitivals by Stowell (1981). There, it is argued that infinitives may be [+Tense], but unspecified for [\pm Past]. One might alternatively claim that such infinitives are [+Tense], but [-AGR].

In this paper I shall look at what seems to be a further instantiation of option (b) [+Tense, -AGR], where this combination may also be held responsible for Nominative Case assignment. Furthermore, the paper will show that the content of COMP needs to be further investigated, since there is evidence (1) that COMP also contains Nominative clitics and Focus markers, and (2) that COMP may at times serve as a point of cliticization of object clitics, though the evidence suggests that such cliticization may be a late process, possibly in PF.

1. NOMINATIVES AND INFINITIVES IN WEST-FLEMISH

In order to deal with the feature content of INFL and the content of COMP, I shall look in great detail at the properties of non-finite *te*-infinitives taking Nominative subjects in West-Flemish.¹

It has been pointed out already that several Flemish dialects of Dutch allow a Nominative subject in an infinitival clause (cf. Hoebeke 1975,

De Vriendt 1975, Van Riemsdijk 1978) in sentences such as the following:

- (1) a. Mee ik da te zeggen hee-se dat hus gekocht
 With I that to say has-she that house bought
 'Because of my saying that she has bought that house'
 b. Voor gie da te krygen goa-je vele moeten veranderen
 For you that to get go-you a lot must change
 'In order to get that you'll have to change a lot'
 c. Deur ik da te zeggen hee-se dat hus gekocht
 By I that to say has-she that house bought
 'Because of my saying that, she has bought that house'

It thus appears that West-Flemish allows a nominative subject to appear with a *te*-infinitive in the environment of certain prepositions such as *mee*, *voor*, *deur*,² although, like Dutch, West-Flemish infinitivals normally take PRO or accusative NP subjects:

- (2) a. dan-k proberem voor PRO weg te goan
 that-I try for PRO away to go
 'that I try to go away'
 b. ik zien hem nog were te goan
 I see him still back to go
 'I expect he may yet go back'
 c. ik zien hem nog were goan
 I see him still back go
 (i) 'I expect he may yet go back'
 (ii) 'I remember seeing him go back'

In the examples in (1) above, accusative subjects are usually excluded:

- (1) a'. *Mee myn da te zeggen...³
 With me that to say...

This paper will concentrate on examples with *mee* 'with', but the observations also apply to other Prepositions with nominative-cum-infinitive (NCI) constructions.

The example in (1a) raises a number of questions for an analysis within the Government-Binding framework (Chomsky 1981). In order to discuss these, it is first of all necessary to pair the relevant example with two alternative constructions with *mee*: (i) finite *dat*-clauses
 (ii) infinitives with PRO

- (3a) (=1a) Mee ik da te zeggen . . .
 (3b) Mee PRO da te zeggen, (= With PRO that to say)
 (3c) Mee dan-k(ik) da gezeid heen,
 With that-I(I) that said have,

Assuming that *mee* in all three cases is a preposition, the relevant properties of the examples in (3) can be summarized as follows:

Mee with a clausal complement occurs in three types of contexts:

- [illegible]

Following current proposals (see section 0. above) I assume that COMP contains INFL. In (4c) *mee* introduces a finite clause: INFL is specified for [+Tense], [+AGR]; the complementiser is (inflected) *da* (cf. Bennis & Haegeman 1983, Haegeman 1984). (4b) is an example of the unmarked infinitival with INFL being negatively specified for both Tense and AGR. I shall argue that there are grounds for assuming that in (4a) INFL is [+Tense], [-AGR].

The data exhibited in (1)-(3) and summarized in (4) give rise to two questions.

(i) it is not obvious from (4) how the NP in (4a) may be assigned Nominative Case. If we assume that Nominative case is assigned by AGR (cf. Chomsky 1981) there is no Nominative Case assigner available in (4a).

It clearly will not do to return to the position of Chomsky 1980 in which it was argued that Nominative Case is assigned by [+Tense] unless arguments can be put forward for such a position. It seems thus that Nominative Case Assignment in this dialect has some marked properties and has to be considered in more detail.

(ii) a related problem for the analysis is the apparent alternation between a lexical (nominative) NP in (4a) and PRO in (4b). If we assume that Case is assigned under government (cf. Levine 1983), the schema in (4a/b) suggests that the governed nominative NP is structurally parallel with PRO. But in standard Government Binding theory this leads to an unacceptable conclusion since it is assumed that PRO is ungoverned.

I shall try to provide an account to solve these two questions.

2. NOMINATIVE SUBJECTS WITH *TE*-INFINITIVES

Before trying to compare the three patterns summarized in (4), I wish to dwell briefly on the NCI construction itself. More specifically, I wish to point out that such nominative subjects may be realized by lexical NPs as well as by pronouns. Among lexical NPs we find proper names, definite NPs, quantified NPs:

- (5) a. Mee Marie da te zeggen
 b. Mee de meester da te zeggen
 With the teacher that to say
 c. Mee zovee volk te kommen⁴
 With so much people to come

However, unlike in the case of finite clauses, the full pronominal term must be used; clitic subjects (with or without the doubling pronoun (cf. Haegeman 1984)) are not allowed:

- (5) d. *Mee-k da te zeggen
 With-I that to say
 e. mee dan-k da gezeid heen
 with that-I that said have

 f. *Mee-k ik da te zeggen
 With-I I that to say
 g. me dan-k ik da gezeid heen
 with that-I I that said have

From the data in (5) a first property of NCI-constructions with prepositions emerges. If we assume that the clitic is a lexical realization of AGR, the nominative case assigner, in finite clauses in (5e) and (5g), then we must conclude that cliticization is not allowed in the NCI constructions, either because there is no Nominative Case assigning AGR or because cliticization in general is not allowed in such NCI clauses.

3. CLITICS AND COMP

The suggestion that cliticization is not allowed in NCI patterns is not acceptable, though, in view of the following. In West-Flemish it is possible to find certain object-clitics (i.e. non-nominative clitics) cliticized onto COMP in finite clauses (cf. the analysis of such facts in Koopman 1984):

- (6) a. mee da-t-ze Valère gezeid heet
 with that-it-them Valère said has
 'because Valère has told it to them'

If subject-clitics are also present, they precede the non-nominative clitics:

- (6) b. mee da-se-t-ze zie gezeid heet
 with that-she-it-them she said has
 'because she has told it to them'

In the *mee*-NCI patterns, object-clitics may also cliticize (at least phonologically – cf. below) to *mee*:

- (6) c. mee-t-ze Valère te zeggen
 d. mee-t-ze zie te zeggen

(5d) and (5f) can thus not be ruled out by arguing that cliticization to the preposition *mee* is ruled out independently.

This will lead us to assume that though Nominative Case is assigned, it is not assigned in the way it is assigned in finite clauses, i.e. by AGR.

4. THE COMP-POSITION

The schema in (4) leaves open what should be the expansion of *S'* in (4a). The question arises whether it is of the form *S' → COMP-S*, and if so, what sort of a COMP we should assume here. Evidence that there is indeed a COMP position may be derived from the following observation. It is a property of West-Flemish that finite clauses may have a Focus marker in COMP to mark, for instance, surprise, emphasis, etc. for the content of the clause:⁵

- (7) a. Morgen goa-tet Valère weg
 tomorrow goes-tet Valère away
 b. ... da-tet Valère morgen weggoat
 ... that-tet Valère tomorrow away goes

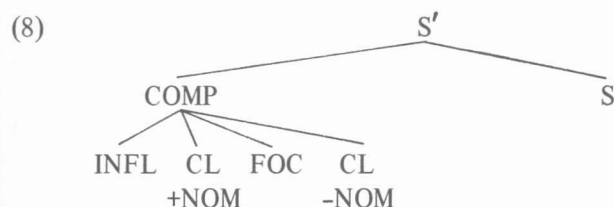
This element *tet* appears *after* clitic subjects and precedes or follows object-clitics depending on the speaker's idiolect:

- (7) c. ... da-se-tet-t-ze gezeid heet
 ... that-she-tet-it-them said has
 d. ... da-se-t-ze-tet gezeid heet
 that-she-it-them-tet said has

In finite clauses then, COMP may be conceived as containing at least the following:

- (i) INFL [+Tense, +AGR]
- (ii) [+NOM] clitics
- (iii) focus marker (*tet*)
- (iv) [-NOM] clitics

Let us assume the structure



It is to be noted, though, that the structure in (8) may very well be surface structure, rather than S-structure. The set of object-[-NOM] clitics that allow cliticization to COMP is restricted to the following: (a) *t* 'it'; (b) *ze* 'she, them'. On the other hand, clitics such as *me* 'me', *je* 'you' 'm 'him', etc. are disallowed. There seems to be no clear unified description covering the clitics that move to COMP. The one factor that does unite them is the superficial fact that they are formally non-distinct from nominative clitics. Such a non-systematic factor may be involved in a late scrambling rule that allows certain clitics to regroup, depending on such factors as rhythm, focus etc.

In non-finite clauses with PRO or accusative subjects, the focus marker may not be present:

- (9)
- a. *dank proberen voor-tet PRO weg te gaan (cf. 2a)
 - b. dank gisteren Valère zagen weggaan
that-I yesterday Valère saw leave
 - c. *dan-k gisteren tet Valère zagen weggaan

If we assume that *tet* signals the presence of a finite COMP, then we may conclude that the NCI clauses following *mee* are also in some sense finite, since they also allow *tet*:

- (9)
- d. mee tet Valère weg te gaan
with tet Valère away to go

whereas the non-finite clauses with PRO-subjects are non-finite: *tet* is not allowed:

- (9) c. *mee tet PRO weg te goan

On the basis of the data in (9), it is possible to argue that the COMP position of NCI constructions is roughly:

$$\text{COMP} \rightarrow \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{INFL} \\ [+Tense] \\ [-AGR] \end{array} \right] - \text{FOC} - \left(\begin{array}{c} \text{CL} \\ [-NOM] \end{array} \right)$$

It is rather paradoxical to assume that infinitive clauses are tensed. I shall try to develop this point below.

5. 'FINITENESS' AND *TE*-INFINITIVES

Section 3 proposes a formal indication to suggest that *mee*-NCI clauses are more like finite tensed clauses than like non-finite untensed ones. Here I wish to follow this up with an interpretative distinction which confirms the claim. If we return again to the examples in (3) and look at the tense and modality readings of the *mee* clauses, it soon emerges that (3a) is much closer to the finite (3c) than to the non-finite (3b). In the finite variant of the construction it appears that any tense selection and any adverbial modification in the subordinate clause is possible, provided it is pragmatically acceptable. The tense and adverbial selection and interpretation do not crucially depend on the properties of the main clause:

- (10) a. Mee dan-k da gisteren gezeid heen goa-se zie morgen weg
with that-I that yesterday said have goes-she she tomorrow away
b. Mee dan-k gisteren nie moesten werken heen-k gekust
with that-I yesterday not had-to work have-I cleaned
c. mee dan-k morgen moeten werken heen-k gisteren gekust
with that-I tomorrow have-to work have-I yesterday cleaned

The reason expressed in the subordinate clause may be located in the past, present or future, and the time-location is independent of the main verb tense.

In the control clauses, on the contrary, the subordinate clause cannot have an independent time location. The time interpretation is directly dependent on the time-adverbial in the main clause:

- (11) a. k-heen vee geld verdiend mee PRO gazetten te verkopen
I-have much money earned with PRO newspapers to sell

Here the time assigned to the subordinate clause is "controlled" by that of the higher clause: i.e. in (11a) the time of the adverbial clause is 'past'. It is not possible to insert a time-adverbial:

- (11) b. *k-heen vee geld verdiend mee PRO gisteren gazetten te verkopen⁶
I have much money earned with PRO yesterday newspapers to sell

Similarly, if the main clause has future reference this determines the time reading of the *mee* clause:

- (11) c. k-goan vee geld verdienen mee PRO gazetten te verkopen
I-go much money earn with PRO newspapers to sell

and for the present-time likewise:

- (11) d. k-verdienen vee geld mee PRO gazetten te verkopen
I-earn much money with PRO newspapers to sell

If the main clause has a conditional, non-factive reading, the sub-clause again receives this reading too:

- (11) e. k-zoun vee geld keunen verdienen mee PRO gazetten te verkopen
I-would much money be able to earn with
'I could earn much money by ...'

It is also possible to find generic sentences with the control clause:

- (11) f. ge keut vee geld verdienen mee PRO gazetten te verkopen
you can much money earn with PRO newspapers to sell

In (11f) *ge* is the second person pronoun and may mean either 'you' the interlocutor (specific reading) or 'anyone' (generic reading).⁷

The *mee*-NCI clauses can be seen to have the properties of finite clauses as far as temporal and modal interpretations are concerned. Unlike the non-finite control clauses, they allow a time-adverbial and there is a time-location independent of that of the main clause:

- (12) a. mee ik da gisteren te zeggen hee-se dat hus gekocht
with I that yesterday to say has-she that house bought (PAST)
b. mee ik da gisteren te zeggen goa-se dat hus kopen

- with I that yesterday to say goes-she that house buy (FUT)
 c. *mee ik tnoaste joar weg te goan heen-k dat hus verkocht*
 with I next year away to go have-I that house sold

Though at first sight time reference is free in the *mee*-clause in (12), one restriction is necessary: the NCI clauses always carry a factive implication. Thus (12c), for example, cannot imply that the future event is subject to further contingencies; the future event is here presented as a fact. The factive reading and the exclusion of conditionality entails that *mee* clauses with NCI-patterns cannot refer to generic events (cf. 11f):

- (12) d. *!mee gie gazetten te verkopen zou-j keunen vee geld verdienen*

(12d) can only refer to the 'fact': you will be selling newspapers; it cannot have the generic reading 'one can earn a lot of money by selling newspapers'.⁸

The factivity associated with *mee*-NCI clauses is also to be found in finite *mee-dat* clauses, though here the wider selection of auxiliary verbs allows a wider range of meanings:

- (13) a. *mee dan-k (ik) keunen gazetten verkopen*
 with that-I (I) can newspapers sell
 'given the fact that I can sell newspapers'

In (13a) my ability to sell newspapers is presented as a fact.

On the basis of the evidence presented here I would like to propose that *mee* in West-Flemish selects either a non-finite control clause, in which case it indicates some activity without any implication as to the assignment of tense/modality, or alternatively, *mee* selects a factive *S'*, in the form of a finite *dat* clause or a non-finite NCI clause. It might be argued that in the latter case *mee* selects a clause marked for 'mood' ('indicative' or 'non-subjunctive').

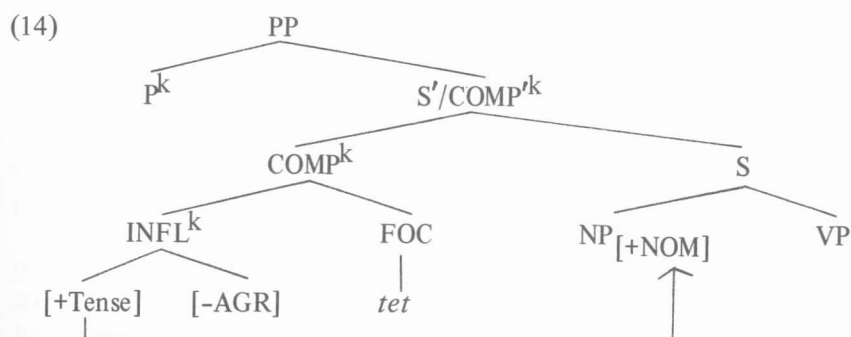
Developing this suggestion slightly more, I would like to propose that infinitivals may be specified as [-Tense, -AGR] (in the control patterns) or as [+Tense, -AGR]. In the latter case, represented by the infinitivals with NCI, I would assume that *S'* rewrites as COMP-S; that COMP contains an INFL-position specified for [\pm Tense], but with no selection of [\pm Past]. A non-specified Tense roughly corresponds to a specification for 'mood'. The COMP of such finite infinitivals thus contains some abstract Tense position (cf. Stowell 1981 for similar proposals):

COMP \rightarrow [[INFL [+Tense] - [-AGR]] - FOC]

[+Tense] creates a domain for temporal interpretation.

6. NOMINATIVE CASE

On the basis of the data above, I would thus propose that *mee*-NCI constructions have the following structure:



mee, a Preposition [-N, -V], is a Case assigner under current assumptions. More specifically, *mee* assigns accusative case. In (14) factive *mee* governs S'/COMP'. I assume that factive *mee* subcategorizes for a 'finite' COMP,⁹ in the sense that there is an INFL [+Tense] present (which may, but need not be, unspecified), and [\pm AGR]. Let us assume that *mee* is coindexed with COMP/S' and transmits Case-assigning (k) properties to COMP. However, not the full set of these properties are transmitted. If we assume that *mee*, like any P, assigns [+Case, +ACCUS], it must be that by transmitting the properties to COMP only the general property of [+Case] is carried over,¹⁰ and not the specific [+ACCUS] property. In other words the assignment of case properties of *mee* to COMP results in activating the potential of Case assignment of [+Tns] in COMP. But, as in main clauses, COMP assigns NOM.

It must be added here that the effect of this transmission of Case assigning properties to abstract Case assigner in COMP is subject to dialectal variation: in some dialects of Flemish the full set of Case-assigning properties of *mee* is transmitted: these dialects have *mee* with ACI clauses.

The mechanism proposed here is one by which Case-assigning properties in the P(*mee*) actualize the Case-assigning properties of abstract, non-lexical material in COMP. However, this transmission process entails that only the general properties of *mee* are handed down, activating the specific properties of COMP to assign Nominative Case.

7. THE GOVERNING CATEGORY

In (15) below it is shown how *mee*-NCI clauses behave with respect to the

Binding Theory. Note that preposed clauses apparently are free to contain any NP except anaphors, while postposed clauses are subject to constraints:

- (15) a. Mee zie_i da te zeggen hee Marie_i da gekregen
 With she that to say has Mary that got
 b. Mee Marie_i da te zeggen hee-se_i da gekregen
 c. *Mee heur eigen da te zeggen
 herself
- (15) d. *Marie_i hee da gekregen mee zie_i da te zeggen
 e. *z_i-heet da gekregen mee Marie_i da te zeggen
 f. *Marie heet da gekregen mee heur eigen da te zeggen

The contrast can be accounted for (at least with respect to (15a-c) vs. (15d-f)) if we assume that preposed clauses are outside the c-command domain of the subject-NP, e.g. if attached to S'' or E.

With respect to (15d-f), then, we have to assume that the Governing Category for the lower NP must be larger than the *mee*-NCI clause, and it must be extended to the next clause up (cf. 15g).

- (15) g. Marie_i peinst da Valère goa veranderen mee zie_i weg te goan
 Mary thinks that Valère goes change with she away to go

The account proposed in (6) above provides a partial explanation. The Governing Category of an NP must contain (i) a governor, and (ii) a SUBJECT accessible to the NP.

On the basis of (14) we assume that the governor for the subject NP in the NCI clause is either INFL in COMP, or possibly *mee*, and that the clause itself does not contain an accessible subject, being [-AGR]. It is the AGR of the next clause up, or its [NP,S], which will be the accessible SUBJECT, hence the Governing Category is extended.

The question remains then to be solved why the Nominative subject may not contain reflexives or reciprocals. I have as yet no clear proposal to make here. Possibly one has to invoke an independent requirement for anaphoric subject positions (cf. Odijk 1983).

8. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have proposed that *mee*-NCI clauses in Flemish are to be related to finite tensed clauses. I propose that they have an abstract INFL in COMP, which is specified for [+Tense], but unspecified for [±Past] and [-AGR]. The Preposition *mee* selects such a 'finite' COMP and transmits

its Case-assigning property, thus activating the possibility of Nominative assignment of COMP. In the dialect discussed here, the transmission of Case-assignment properties results in a loss of the specific property [+ACCUSATIVE], and only ensures that Case assignment as such is handed down.

With respect to the general format of Case theory, it would seem to me that the proposal formulated here casts doubt on the validity of strongly linking NOMINATIVE with one specific property of AGR and/or Tense. Rather it seems that NOM is the default Case, assigned by a Case assigner which lacks a more specific property such as [+Accusative]. (See Jaeggli 1982 and Odijk 1983 for proposals that Nominative is the default Case.)

This paper demonstrates that the specification of Tense and AGR in INFL is in principle independent, and that there is evidence for four possible combinations:

- (a) [+Tense, +AGR]
- (b) [+Tense, -AGR]
- (c) [-Tense, +AGR]
- (d) [-Tense, -AGR]

of which (b) and (c) are possibly marked cases (*).

If we assume that the choice of the complementiser is determined by the feature content of INFL, it then appears that *da* in West-Flemish realizes not merely [+Tense], but more specifically [+Tense, +AGR]

NOTES

1. More specifically, the dialect spoken to the northeast of Bruges, in the rural area south of Knokke-Heist. The observations extend to other dialects, though.
2. Some dialects also allow a Nominative with causal *van*:
 - (i) Er was vee scha van de kerke te springen
there was much damage of the church to explode
3. At least in the specific dialect discussed here (cf. (1)).
4. The construction contrasts with finite clauses with nominative subjects where quantified and indefinite NPs require *er*-insertion:

- (i) mee dat-er zovee volk was
- (ii) *mee da zovee volk was

* (b) to be found in the West-Flemish data above, and (c) to be found in the inflected infinitives of Portuguese.

The impossibility of having *er* insertion may be related to the observation that [+NOM] clitics are disallowed.

(iii) *mee -ter zovee volk te komen

In (iii) the *-(t)er* element may be grammatical if interpreted as 'daar' (there) indicating place.

5. I assume here that *tet* is a FOCUS-marker in COMP. This was suggested to me by Anneke Groos (personal communication). The exact function of *tet* is not clear to me yet.

6. The requirement may perhaps be slightly too stringent. It seems to me that the adverbial *gisteren* is fully acceptable with a durative reading. Other speakers allow adverbials of temporal location even more freely, but only if they match the temporal location of the higher clause; an independent non-matching time adverbial is ungrammatical.

7. Compare (11g) *nen mens keut vee geld verdienen mee PRO gazetten te verkopen* where *nen mens* 'man = one' is a generic NP.

8. Compare these examples with (12e), and with (11g) in note 8.

(12) e. *Mee nen mens gazetten te verkopen
With a man (=any one) newspapers to sell

9. Not all Ps subcategorize for 'factive' clauses. While *deur* (and *van*) also take factive complements, *voor* takes non-factive complements. Temporal Ps thus select a tensed complement to which they assign a specific modal reading.

10. The property [+CASE] trickles down to the Head of COMP, i.e. to the INFL in COMP.

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