Dissecting semi-lexicality Early grammaticalisation causing morphosyntactic variation

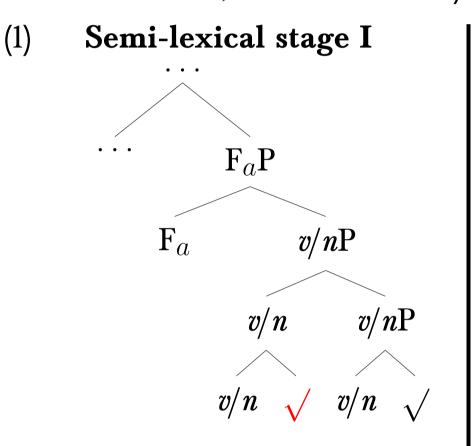
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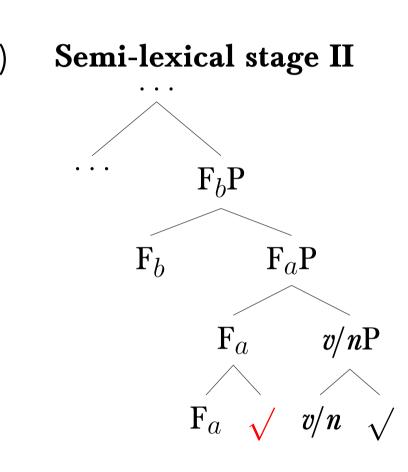
Main proposal: two stages of semi-lexicality

Main question: how do we analyse elements that show both functional and lexical properties, i.e. 'semi-lexical' elements?

Theoretical assumptions:

- 1. A lexical item is a featureless root; a functional item is a (bundle of) functional feature(s) (Halle & Marantz 1993; Harley & Noyer 1999; Borer 2005a);
- 2. Semi-lexicality is the result of a root being inserted in the functional domain of another root (Klockmann 2017; Cavirani-Pots 2020; Cavirani-Pots et al. 2021; see also Song 2019);
- 3. v and n a mere categorizers of roots, not introducing any arguments (Kratzer 1996; Lin 2001; Marantz 2005; Bowers 2010; Lohndal 2014; cf. Borer 2005b).





 \rightarrow The red root is the semi-lexically used root.

Semi-lexicality is the result of grammaticalisation:

Lexical > semi-lexical st. I > semi-lexical st. II > functional

Today's empirical domain: Dutch verbs

Lexical verbs select a *te*-complement:

Hij heeft besloten te werken. he has decided to work 'He decided to work.'

Functional verbs never do:

Hij heeft **moeten** (* te) werken. he has must to work 'He had to work.'

Verbs like *hoeven* 'need' do so optionally:

- Hij heeft niet hoeven (te) werken. he has not needed to work 'He didn't need to work.'
- \rightarrow *Hoeven* adds modality.

Main empirical observation:

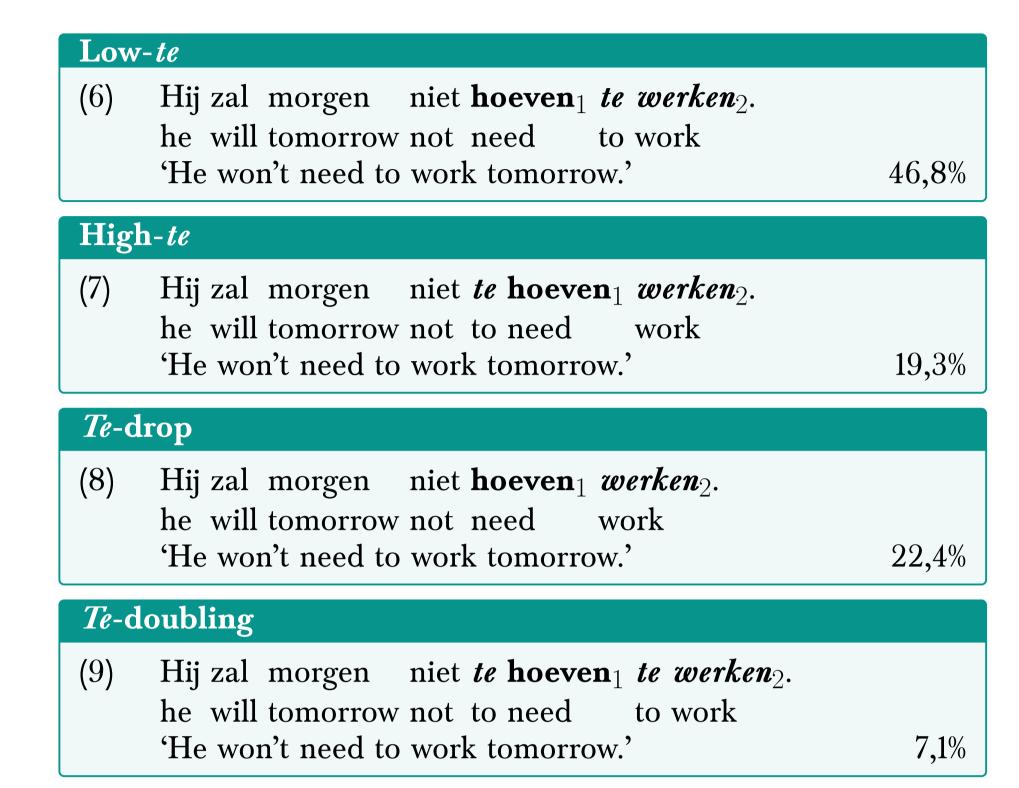
Hoeven shows different morphosyntactic behavior compared to both functional and lexical verbs.

Main gist of the analysis

Hoeven is a semi-lexical verb, which is grammaticalising from stage I of semi-lexicality into stage II.

The data

Based on a large-scale questionnaire study (459 speakers):



High degree of intraspeaker variation: 139 speakers allow 2 versions, 96 speakers allow 3 versions, 29 speakers allow 4 versions.

Prerequisites for the analysis

Three theoretical prerequisites:

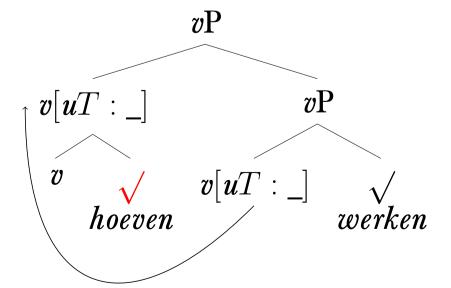
- 1. Every verbal head enters the derivation with a unvalued [uT]feature; every functional verbal head has a valued [iT]-feature corresponding to its semantic interpretation (e.g. v: [uT:_], Mod: [iT:Mod], Wurmbrand 2012);
- 2. Only v can spell out te, and only when its [uT]-feature has been valued for [irrealis];
- 3. Verbal feature valuation in Germanic is the result of Reverse Agree (Wurmbrand 2012).

The analysis: *Hoeven* in semi-lexical stage I

Root hoeven is used to add modality of (absence of) necessity; Dutch has no formal means yet to add this functional information.

In stage I (cf. (1)), the semi-lexical root is merged with a verbaliser, and then inserted low in the functional structure of the other root.

Agree step I (semi-lexical stage I)



[uT] on the lower v probes up and Agrees with [uT] on the higher v.

No valuation is possible, but a feature link is established (cf. Pesetsky & Torrego 2007; Haegeman & Lohndal 2010).

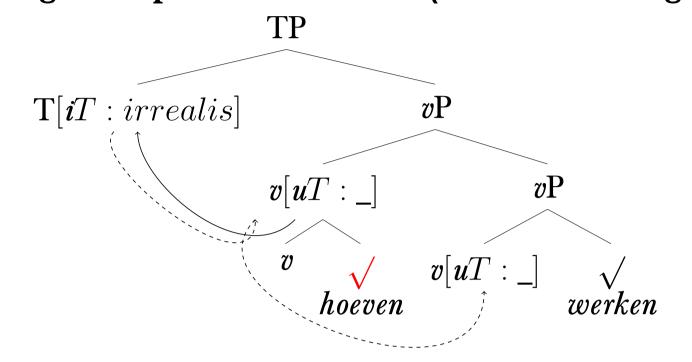
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Agree step II and valuation (semi-lexical stage I)



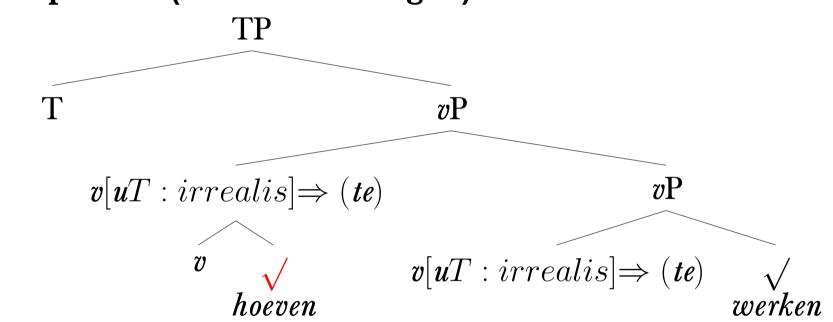
T is Merged, and comes with an [iT]-feature valued for [irrealis] (due to modal zal 'will' in V2 (cf. (6-9)).

[uT] on the higher v probes up and Agrees with [iT] on T.

Since the two [uT]'s in the structure Agreed before and formed a feature chain, they both get valuated for [irrealis].

Based on both [uT]-features present in the structure being valuated for [irrealis], we expect te to be spelled out twice: i.e. te-doubling.

Spell out (semi-lexical stage I)



 \rightarrow Why is *te*-doubling not the only option (and in fact the least common option)?

Proposal: spelling out only one of the valued [uT]-features of the feature chain of both v's suffices at PF (and is fact preferred).

Given that both the higher v position and the lower v position can be used to spell out [uT:irrealis], we find both **high-**te and **low-**te.

Furthermore, since the choice for spell out is arbitrary, we expect a high degree of intraspeaker variation, which is indeed the case.

 \rightarrow What about *te*-drop?

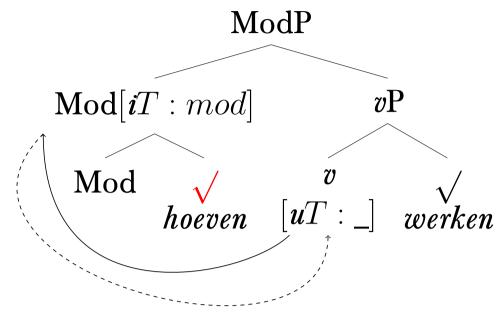
The analysis: *Hoeven* in semi-lexical stage II

Van de Velde (2017) shows that over the last 50 years, hoeven is rapidly occurring more without te than with te.

 $V \rightarrow \textit{Hoeven}$ is grammaticalising into stage II of semi-lexicality.

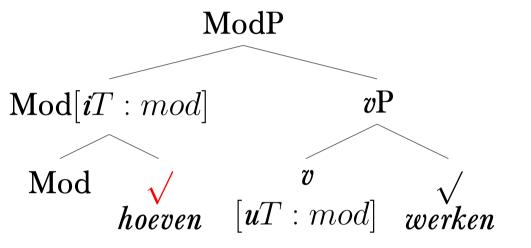
In stage II (cf. (2)), hoeven is merged with a functional head Mod, and then inserted in the functional projection.

Agree and valuation (semi-lexical stage II)



The [uT]-feature on v probes up, and finds the [iT:Mod]-feature on Mod: the [uT]-feature on v gets valued for Mod.

(14) Spell out (semi-lexical stage II)



[uT:Mod] on v cannot be spelled out as te: werken 'work' gets spelled out as a bare infinitive.

I.e. in the second stage of semi-lexicality hoeven uniformily shows te-drop.

Conclusion

High degrees of morphosyntactic variation and optionality of semi-lexical items can be accounted for by assuming two stages of semi-lexicality, with different underlying syntactic structures.

Outlook

In Cavirani-Pots (2020), I extend this analysis to the semi-lexical use of zitten 'sit'. This verb adds aspectual information (progressive/durative aspect) and shows a high degree of variation in the presence and position of *te*:

Hij zal wel weer (te) zitten₁ (te) werken₂. he will aff again to sit to work 'He is probably working again.'

 \rightarrow The variation regarding te can be explained if we assume zitten is grammaticalising from stage I of semi-lexicality into stage II.

Selected references

•Cavirani-Pots, C. 2020. Roots in Progress. Semi-lexicality in the Dutch and Afrikaans verbal domain. Amsterdam: LOT Dissertation Series. •Cavirani-Pots, C., De Belder, M. and Klockmann, H. 2021. Semi-lexicality: Syntax or lexicon? Talk to be presented at GLOW 44 (April 15 2021). •Klockmann, H. 2017. The design of semi-lexicality. Evidence from Case and Agreement in the nominal domain. Utrecht: LOT Dissertation Series. •Wurmbrand, S. 2012. Parasitic participles. Evidence for the theory of verb clusters. Taal en Tongval 64: 129-156.

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