

*En laat/dat ek nou net die koek laat val het!*¹

Laat-V1 constructions in Afrikaans

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1. Introduction

It is quite common across languages to find imperative-like constructions that don't have the directive meaning that we expect from imperatives (Holvoet 2020). Both Afrikaans and Dutch feature V1 constructions with the verb *laat/laten* 'let' that cannot be classified as commands (see Afrikaans in (1) and Dutch in (2)), but that have the same form as some of the *let-*imperatives that we find in these languages (see Afrikaans in (3) and Dutch in (4)).

(1) *Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en laat ek nou net die koek laat val het!*

the party starts over 10 minutes and let I now just the cake let fall have

'The party is starting in 10 minutes, and it just so happens that I dropped the cake!'

(2) *Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou*

my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would

schrijven, en laat ik nou net mijn boek afgemaakt hebben!

write and let I now just my book finished have

'My boss said that he would give me a raise if I wrote a book, and it just so happens that I finished my book.'

(3) *Laat hom tog na die partytjie toe gaan!*

let him MP to the party to go

'Just let him go to the party!'

(4) *Laat hem gewoon naar het feest gaan!*

let him just to the party go

'Just let him go to the party!'

Instead of giving a command as in (3) and (4), the sentences in (1) and (2) are used to indicate the speaker's surprise, amazement, or even shock about a certain event or action. From now on,

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I will refer to non-commanding constructions like the ones in (1) and (2) as *pseudo-let imperatives* or *PLI constructions* for short.

The pseudo-let imperatives in Afrikaans and Dutch can express two kinds of meanings: a hypothetical one and a mirative² one. The hypothetical meaning arises when the speaker wants to express a fact that would hold in a hypothetical situation. These PLIs are similar in interpretation to conditional uses of imperatives that we see across languages (Aikhenvald 2010: 237). The conditional imperative is used by the speaker to get the addressee to imagine a specific situation, and then present the inevitable outcomes or result of that situation (Holvoet 2020: 336). To that end, conditional imperatives like *Leave out the flour and your cake will be a disaster!*, have the condition or the hypothetical situation sketched by the speaker (leaving out the flour) preceding the consequence in that specific situation (the cake being a disaster). PLI constructions with a hypothetical meaning behave similarly in this respect.

Consider the PLI constructions with hypothetical meaning in (5) for Afrikaans and (6) for Dutch:

(5) *Laat ek nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog 'n paar skoene!*
let I now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes
'Whenever I walk into a Nike store, I buy another pair of shoes.'

(6) *Laat mij een Apple-winkel binnegaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*
let me a Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget
'Whenever I go into an Apple store, I buy a new gadget.'

In the example in (5), given a hypothetical situation where the speaker enters a Nike store, the resulting action, the buying of more shoes, is a given. A similar idea holds for the Dutch example in (6).

The mirative PLI, on the other hand, is used to convey the speaker's surprise or amazement about a certain event or action. Contrary to the PLI constructions with hypothetical meaning, these mirative PLIs do not refer to a hypothetical situation, but rather to something that is true in the here-and-now. For instance, the example in (1) above conveys the speaker's disbelief or shock about the fact that she has just dropped the cake that was meant for a party starting in 10 minutes. Similarly, in the Dutch example in (2), the speaker is surprised or amazed by the unexpected coincidence that she has finished her book and that she will get a raise for that.

² Mirativity was first defined by DeLancey (1997: 1) as "the grammatical marking of unexpected information" and mirative constructions are used when something has exceeded the speaker's expectation.

The goal of this paper is twofold: Firstly, I show that the PLI-*laat/laten* ‘let’ has undergone grammaticalisation in both Afrikaans and Dutch by drawing on criteria used by Van Craenenbroeck and Van Koppen (2015, 2017) in their work on the grammaticalisation of perception and causative verbs in Dutch. Furthermore, I show that Afrikaans PLI-*laat* has grammaticalised a bit further than its Dutch counterpart. Secondly, I explore whether this grammaticalisation is due to purely internal changes, or whether language contact has also played a role here. I will suggest a possible explanation for why Afrikaans PLI-*laat* has grammaticalised a bit further than its Dutch counterpart by proposing that grammaticalisation as an internal change played a vital role in the development of the PLI constructions in both languages, but that Afrikaans’ contact with other related and unrelated languages throughout its history might have caused it to grammaticalise faster than its Dutch counterpart.

This paper is structured as follows: in section 2, I discuss some characteristics of the PLI constructions identified above, harnessing the criteria used by Van Craenenbroeck and Van Koppen (2015, 2017; henceforth VCVK) to discuss the grammaticalisation of PLI-*laat/laten* in Afrikaans and Dutch. Thereafter, in section 3, I explore the question of whether these changes occurred because of internal factors, contact with other languages, or a combination of the two. Section 4 concludes.

2. Grammaticalisation of PLI-*laat/laten*

The process of grammaticalisation involves lexical items becoming more functional through regular use in specific grammatical contexts (Hopper and Traugott 2003, Roberts and Roussou 2003). Grammaticalisation does not just occur abruptly; there is usually a gradual and partially overlapping shift from one form to another (Hopper and Traugott 2003).

In their investigation into the grammaticalisation of perception and causative verbs in Dutch, VCVK (2015, 2017) identify three imperative(-like) contexts where these verbs occur and they propose a three-step grammaticalisation process or path. The three imperative(-like) contexts that they investigate are (i) normal imperatives (see example (7)), (ii) inflected imperatives, where the imperative verb displays number agreement with the direct object or with the subject of the embedded infinitival (see example (8)), and (iii) imperatives as discourse markers, where the imperative verb does not have a directive interpretation anymore (see example (9)).

(7) **Hoor** die meeuwen es een kabaal maken!

hear the seagulls PRT a racket make

‘Listen to those seagulls make noise!’

(8) **Hoor-e** die meeuwen es een kabaal maken!

hear-PL those seagulls PRT a racket make

‘Listen to those seagulls make noise!’

(9) *Die meeuwen maken een kabaal, hoor!*

those seagulls make a racket hear

‘Those seagulls sure make a lot of noise!’

(Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2015:2)

VCVK (2015, 2017) recognise five criteria in the existing literature that can be used to indicate how the verbs have grammaticalised across these three contexts (see Abney 1987, Hopper and Traugott 1993). These criteria highlight the characteristics of functional elements as compared to lexical ones. Since grammaticalisation entails the change of a lexical item into a functional one, these can therefore be seen as features probing the extent of grammaticalisation. The five characteristics are (VCVK 2015:2):

1. Functional items can be phonologically reduced.
2. Functional items have a semantically bleached meaning.
3. Functional items do not have a theta-grid, and therefore lack argument structure.
4. Functional items form a closed class.
5. Functional items can be morphologically defective.

According to these criteria, VCVK note that causative and perception verbs in normal imperatives are the least grammaticalised (none of the above-mentioned features are characteristic of these elements). When used as discourse markers, these causative and perception verbs are the most grammaticalised (all of the above-mentioned features are characteristic of these elements); in inflected imperatives they are somewhere in-between on the grammaticalisation path (only some of the above-mentioned features are characteristic of these elements).

Similarly, the PLI constructions that are considered in this paper are imperative-like structures with the causative verb *laat/laten* ‘let’ that no longer have an imperative meaning. According to Aikhenvald (2010: 346) and Kuteva et al. (2019: 251), the imperative verb *let* often undergoes grammaticalisation. By drawing on the criteria used by VCVK and mentioning some

other characteristics of PLI constructions, I will show that the PLI-*laat/laten* ‘let’ in Afrikaans and Dutch has undergone grammaticalisation in a similar way to the perception and causative verbs in VCVK’s study.

The first of VCVK’s criteria deals with phonological reduction. As mentioned above, the possibility for an element to be phonologically reduced can be an indicator of grammaticalisation. In Afrikaans, both the PLI with the hypothetical meaning in (10) and the mirative meaning in (11) allow for *laat* ‘let’ to be phonologically reduced to *lat*. This, however, is not a distinguishing feature of Afrikaans PLI constructions, as many forms of *laat* ‘let’ can be reduced to *lat* in colloquial Afrikaans. Consider the exhortative imperative in (12):

(10) *Lat ek nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog ‘n paar skoene!*
let_{reduced} I now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes
‘Whenever I walk into a Nike store, I buy another pair of shoes.’

(11) *Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en lat ek nou net die koek laat val het!*
the party start over 10 minutes and let_{reduced} I now just the cake let fall have
‘The party starts in 10 minutes, and it just so happens that I dropped the cake!’

(12) *Lat hom tog na die partytjie toe gaan!*
let_{reduced} him MP to the party to go
‘Just let him go to the party!’

In standard Dutch, neither of the PLI constructions allow for phonological reduction of *laten* ‘let’, as is illustrated in (13) and (14).³

(13) **Lat mij een Apple-winkel binnegaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*
let_{reduced} me a Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget

(14) **Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou schrijven, en lat ik nou net mijn boek afgemaakt hebben!*
my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would
write and let_{reduced} I now just my book finished have

Secondly, VCVK investigate whether the imperative verb has undergone semantic bleaching. It is usually the case that the lexical meaning of an item is weakened or even lost through the process of grammaticalisation. It can also happen that other meanings can become associated

³ Preliminary explorations suggest that there are varieties of Dutch that do allow for the phonological reduction of *laten* ‘let’ and hence behave more like Afrikaans in this respect. I leave this for future research, however.

with the item during this process (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 3). Both the PLI with the hypothetical meaning and the PLI with the mirative meaning in Afrikaans and Dutch have undergone semantic bleaching, as the permissive or causative meaning of *laat/laten* ‘let’ has been lost or at least weakened. This semantic loss is made especially clear by the fact that the mirative PLI *laat/laten* ‘let’ can co-occur with the regular, causative *laat/laten* ‘let’ as in examples (15) and (16). In these examples, the causative *laat/laten* ‘let’ is the boldfaced one.

(15) *Blykbaar is Jan nie goed met kinders nie, en laat ek hom nou net die kinders
apparently is Jan not good with children not and let I him now just the children
laat help het.
let help have
‘Apparently Jan is not good with kids, and it just so happens that I let him help the
children.’*

(16) *Blykbaar kan Jan niet goed met kinderen omgaan, en laat ik hem nou net die
apparently can Jan not good with children around.go and let I him now just the
kinderen hebben laten helpen.
children have let help
‘Apparently Jan is not good with kids, and it just so happens that I let him help the
children.’*

The third criterion is that functional elements generally lack argument structure. For this criterion, VCVK (2015, 2017) consider whether the relevant structures have a *pro*-subject (external agent) or not. They use reflexive binding as a test, and note that in normal imperatives, there is a syntactically present second-person *pro*-subject, as it can bind a reflexive; agreeing imperatives, however, cannot contain a reflexive and therefore, a *pro*-subject is lacking in this case. In contrast to the transitive perception verb *horen* ‘hear’ that VCVK used when testing this criterion, *let*-imperatives do not have the kind of internal argument that can be reflexivised. Instead, *let*-imperatives feature first and third person causees, i.e. indirect objects (Collins 2004, Aikhenvald 2010). Considering the above-mentioned differences, it is necessary to first discuss the regular argument structure of *let*-imperatives before exploring the argument structure of PLI-*laat/laten* ‘let’.

The usual argument structure of *let*-imperatives is generally assumed to entail a causer, which is the agent of *let*, a caused event, and a causee, which is also the agent of the caused event. This is illustrated abstractly in simplified form in (17):

(17) ..._{[VP causer laat-v [VP [DP causee][VP caused event]]]}⁴

Assuming this to be the argument structure of ungrammaticalised *let*, we can now explore the extent to which this argument structure is maintained (or not) in the Afrikaans and Dutch PLI constructions.

Both the Afrikaans mirative and hypothetical PLI constructions can only occur with a nominative subject (e.g. *ek* ‘I’ in examples (1) and (5) above). In these cases, it is clear that the PLI does not have the regular argument structure of *let*-imperatives, as set out above. For one, the identity of the causer – which pinpoints a specific entity for regular causatives – has become vague and unspecifiable in the case of the PLI construction: the interpreted causer corresponds to the kind of impersonal or generic subject found in impersonal constructions (Cinque 1988, Cabredo Hofherr 2006). Furthermore, the unexpected nominative case of the pronoun *ek* ‘I’ following *laat* ‘let’ shows that this is no longer the causee, as causees are oblique-marked forms. The use of the expected oblique pronoun *my* ‘me’ after *laat* ‘let’ (as in example (18) below) is possible in Afrikaans conditionals that look like hypothetical PLIs, but in this case, we are dealing with a normal *let*-imperative and not a PLI construction.

(18) *Laat (jy) my nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog 'n paar skoene!*
let you me now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes
‘If you let me go into a Nike store, I will buy another pair of shoes.’

In this example, the lexical meaning of the permissive or causative *laat* ‘let’ is still clearly visible, while this is not the case in the PLI constructions (see criterion 2 above). This interpretation can be further emphasized by the presence of an overt second person causative agent (*jy* ‘you’ in (18)), which is co-referential with the addressee, thus highlighting the imperative force and permissive nature of the construction. The use of a second person pronoun in these *let*-type imperatives can either refer to an actual addressee, as is the case in (18), or to an imagined or generic *jy* ‘you’, which seems to be the point of departure for the grammaticalised forms. In contrast with the PLI constructions, *laat* ‘let’ in example (18) has therefore retained its usual argument structure where a causer, causee, and caused event are all syntactically present, supporting the claim that this is a normal *let*-imperative.

For the Dutch PLI with a hypothetical meaning, only an oblique causee like *mij* ‘me’ is acceptable, as is illustrated in example (6) above. In this case, the nominative pronoun *ik* ‘I’ can

⁴ This simplified structure reflects a Larsonian structure (Larson 1988).

never be used (see example (19)), in contrast to its Afrikaans counterpart. This shows that the Dutch hypothetical PLI still has at least some of the usual argument structure of *let*-imperatives.

(19) **Laat ik een Apple-winkel binnegaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*

let I an Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget

On the other hand, the Dutch mirative PLI construction can select either a nominative subject or an oblique causee, and there seems to be no interpretational difference between the two forms. An example with the nominative pronoun is illustrated in (2) above, and one with an oblique causee is given in (20) below:

(20) *Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou*

my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would

schrijven, en laat mij nou net mijn boek afgemaakt hebben!

write and let me now just my book finished have

‘My boss said that he would give me a raise if I wrote a book, and it just so happens that I finished my book.’

The facts mentioned above clearly show where the PLI constructions have retained the normal argument structure of *let*-imperatives and where not. The constructions in which *laat/laten* ‘let’ takes a causee argument (e.g. *my/mij* ‘me’) do not lack argument structure; these mirror the normal imperative *let*-constructions in the types of arguments that they can take. This is illustrated in simplified form in (21), where *laat* ‘let’ is assumed to be a light verb (v) selecting a causer-subject (PRO), an indirect object DP-causee (*my*) and a caused-event VP of which the causee is the agentive subject:

(21) ..._{[VP PRO laat-v [VP [DP my][VP in ‘n Nike-winkel ingaan]]]}⁵

On the other hand, the construction in which *laat/laten* ‘let’ is followed by a nominative subject pronoun (*ek/ik* ‘I’) looks like it needs to be considered as a case where *laat/laten* ‘let’ instead takes a clausal (i.e. CP) rather than a complex VP complement as in (21) above. If this is correct, PLIs do not lack argument structure; they have a different, innovated argument structure compared. The innovated argument structure of the PLIs with nominative subjects is illustrated, once again in simplified form, in (22):

(22) ...*laat* [_{CP} *ek in ‘n Nike-winkel ingaan...*]

⁵ This simplified structure reflects a Larsonian structure (Larson 1988).

In summary, both the Afrikaans hypothetical and mirative PLI constructions can always be represented as in (22), as *laat* ‘let’ in these constructions takes a clausal complement. On the other hand, the Dutch hypothetical PLI can be represented as in (21) as it has retained the normal argument structure of *let*-imperatives. The Dutch mirative PLI has both options as illustrated in (2) and (20), and can be represented by both structures above.

The fourth characteristic of functional items used by VCVK is that they are closed class items. VCVK use this criterion by testing whether all, some, or no other perception or causative verbs can be used in the imperative-like context that they are testing. Perhaps using the term *lexical specialisation* could make the purpose of this criterion a bit clearer: VCVK test whether the Dutch perception and causative verbs have become lexically specialised for use in the different contexts, such that they cannot be replaced by another perception or causative verb. They note that all perception and causative verbs can be used in normal imperatives, which means that none of the verbs are specialised for use in normal imperatives, while only a select few of these verbs can be used in imperatives as discourse markers, making perception and causative verbs specialised for use in this context. In Afrikaans, *laat* ‘let’ is lexically specialised for use in both the hypothetical and mirative PLI, as it cannot be replaced by the other Afrikaans causative verb *maak* ‘make’ (see examples (23) and (24)). For Dutch, in the PLI with the hypothetical interpretation, replacing *laten* ‘let’ with the causative verb *doen* ‘do’ is not completely natural, but still not entirely ungrammatical (see example (25)), which means that *laten* ‘let’ is not fully specialised as the only causative verb that can be used in this case, but it is definitely preferred. On the other hand, replacing *laten* ‘let’ with *doen* ‘do’ in the mirative PLI is completely out (see example (26)), which means that *laten* ‘let’ is specialised for use in this context.

(23) **Maak ek nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog 'n paar skoene!*

make I now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes

(24) *Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en *maak ek nou net die koek laat val het!*

the party starts over 10 minutes and make I now just the cake let fall have

(25) *?Doe mij een Apple-winkel binnegaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*

do me a Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget

(26) *Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou*

my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would

*schrijven, en *doe ik nou net mijn boek afgemaakt hebben.*

write and do I now just my book finished have

The last characteristic of functional items that VCVK consider is their morphological defectiveness. The idea is that functional items lose some morphological features during the process of grammaticalisation. VCVK consider this criterion by testing whether the *horen-*imperatives they are probing have an indicative counterpart and they note that normal imperatives have an indicative form, while inflected imperatives and imperatives as discourse markers cannot be used indicatively. Both the hypothetical and mirative PLI constructions in Afrikaans do not have indicative counterparts, as can be seen in examples (27) and (28) below. In Dutch, the hypothetical PLI does have an indicative counterpart, while the mirative PLI does not. This is illustrated in examples (29) and (30).

(27) **Ek laat nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog 'n paar skoene.*

I let now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes

(28) **Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en ek laat nou net die koek laat val het.*

the party starts over 10 minutes and I let now just the cake let fall have

(29) *Je laat mij een Apple-winkel binnegaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*

you let me a Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget

(30) **Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou*

my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would

schrijven, en ik laat nou net mijn boek afgemaakt hebben

write and I let now just my book finished have

The lack of indicative counterparts in the relevant Afrikaans and Dutch structures may follow from the argument-structure considerations relating to criterion 3 above. An indicative construction in non-null-subject languages like Afrikaans and Dutch differs from V1-imperatives in that it requires an overtly realised subject. Both of the Afrikaans PLI constructions and the Dutch mirative PLI can be represented as in (22) above, without their vaguely specified (impersonal/generic) causer-argument necessarily being syntactically represented. In the absence of a syntactically represented agent-causer, it is not possible to create a well-formed indicative; hence the ungrammaticality of (27), (28), and (30). On the other hand, the *laten* 'let' in the Dutch hypothetical PLI still shows remnants of the normal *let-*imperative argument structure, which means that it does have a syntactically present agent-causer. It is therefore possible for this structure to be realised in the indicative, with an overt subject; the grammaticality of (29) therefore follows.

In addition to VCVK's criteria, there are two other additional properties of these constructions that could add to the understanding of how they have grammaticalised. The first of these concerns insubordination. Insubordination is the main-clause use of something that looks like a subordinate clause (Evans 2007:367). In the Afrikaans mirative PLI, *laat* 'let' can alternate with the complementizer *dat* 'that' (as in example (31)) without a change in meaning. This option is not available in the Afrikaans PLI constructions with a hypothetical meaning (see example (32)).

(31) *Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en dat ek nou net die koek laat val het!*
 the party starts over 10 minutes and that I now just the cake let fall have
 'The party starts in 10 minutes, and it just so happens that I dropped the cake!'

(32) **Dat ek nou net by Nike se winkel ingaan, en ek koop nog 'n paar skoene.*
 that I now just by Nike POSS shop in.go and I buy still a pair shoes

This *laat/dat* 'let/that' alternation suggests that it might be productive to consider Afrikaans mirative PLIs as a type of insubordination structure, with *laat* in mirative PLIs potentially serving as a complementizer (C) element rather than as a light verb. Furthermore, considering the Afrikaans mirative PLIs as insubordination structures may also help us to better understand the apparent difference in the degree of grammaticalisation between the two Afrikaans PLI-*laat* forms and also between Afrikaans and Dutch PLI constructions.

The second property concerns modal particles. Particles such as *nou* ('now') and/or *net* ('just') are obligatory—or at the very least strongly preferred—in the Afrikaans PLI constructions. Consider examples (33) and (34):

(33) *Laat ek ?(nou net) by Nike se winkel in gaan, dan koop ek nog 'n paar skoene.*
 let I now just by Nike POSS shop in go then buy I still a pair shoes

(34) *Die partytjie begin oor 10 minute, en laat ek *(nou net) die koek laat val het.*
 the party starts over 10 minutes and let I now just the cake let fall have

Similarly to their Afrikaans counterparts, Dutch mirative PLI constructions also require the use of modal particles (see example (35)). In contrast, the Dutch PLI construction with the hypothetical interpretation seems to be preferred without the modal particles (as in example (36)).

(35) *Mijn baas zei dat hij me een loonsverhoging zou geven als ik een boek zou schrijven, en laat ik *(nou net) mijn boek afgemaakt hebben!*
 my boss said that he me a raise would give if I a book would write and let I now just my book finished have

(36) *Laat mij (?nou net) een Apple-winkel binnengaan, en ik koop een nieuw gadget.*
 let me a Apple shop in.go and I buy a new gadget

These facts suggest that the meaning of the different PLI constructions is dependent on both the grammaticalised form of the verb *laat/laten* ‘let’ and the activation or otherwise of the structure associated with modal particles.

The following table summarises the facts considered above:

	Dutch hypothetical PLI	Afrikaans hypothetical PLI	Dutch mirative PLI	Afrikaans mirative PLI
Phonological reduction	-	-/+ ⁶	-	-/+ ⁷
Semantic bleaching	+	+	+	+
Lack of usual argument structure	-	+	-/+	+
Lexically specialized	-/+	-	-	-
Morphological defectiveness	-	+	+	+
Insubordination	-	-	-	+
Obligatory modal particles	-	-/+	+	+

⁶ Recall from earlier in this section that the phonological reduction of *laat* is not limited to PLI-contexts.

⁷ See again note 3.

When considering the criteria/characteristics of the PLI constructions above, I can conclude that both Dutch PLI constructions are not as grammaticalised as their Afrikaans counterparts, and thus that Afrikaans PLI-*laat* ‘let’ is more grammaticalised than Dutch PLI-*laten* ‘let’.

3. Internal factors, contact considerations, or both?

In the previous section, I built on VCVK’s (2015, 2017) study on the grammaticalisation of perception and causative verbs, to show that PLI-*laat/laten* ‘let’ has been grammaticalised in a similar way. Going back to the main question of this special issue, it seems like the development of the PLI constructions in Afrikaans and Dutch was heavily influenced by a process that is often viewed as internal, i.e. grammaticalisation. In saying this, a question that has not been addressed in the previous section is why Afrikaans PLI constructions are more grammaticalised than their Dutch counterparts. In this section, I would like to propose that even though internal factors were largely responsible for the development of this phenomenon, language contact played a central role in triggering this development and fueling the speed at which Afrikaans PLI developed compared to the Dutch PLI constructions.

Afrikaans has been in contact with numerous languages from different language families throughout its history (see a.o. Ponelis 1993, Roberge 1994, Deumert 2004, van der Wouden 2012). It was deeply influenced by Dutch, but other European settlers (like the French, German, English, and Portuguese), the indigenous Khoe-people, and the slaves from other African and Asian countries also played their part in the development of Afrikaans. Furthermore, Afrikaans primarily developed as a spoken language which needed to be used (mostly by L1 speakers of languages it was in contact with) within a multilingual society (Roberge 2003). Biberauer (2018) highlights the idea that contact languages that mainly developed as a spoken language, as is the case with Afrikaans, often exhibit many different, highly productive speaker-/hearer-oriented elements and structures. This is especially relevant to the PLI constructions discussed in this paper, as they are primarily used to convey the speaker’s perspective: the speaker either sketches their perspective on some or other hypothetical event, or they express their surprise/shock about a certain fact in the here-and-now.

Language contact can lead to language change on all linguistic levels, depending on the extent to which contact has occurred and how similar the relevant languages are, among other things (Gooskens et al. 2010). According to Walkden and Breitbarth (2019), the speed at which language changes like grammaticalisation can occur is influenced by contact. A well-studied instance of language change is the Jespersen Cycle. It has been argued that language contact

can affect the progression along this cycle (Beyer 2009, Lucas and Lash 2012) and also the speed at which a language moves from one stage to the next (Rutten et al. 2012, Breitbarth 2014). More specifically, in cases of intense language contact, it appears that languages move to the next stage faster.

In light of these facts, it may be that the Afrikaans PLI constructions have grammaticalised further than their Dutch counterparts because Afrikaans has gone through the process of grammaticalisation faster than its Dutch counterpart. This difference is quite clear when considering the difference in argument structure between the PLI constructions (see section 2). While both Afrikaans hypothetical and mirative PLI *laat* ‘let’ always takes a clausal complement, both of the Dutch PLI constructions exhibit the regular selection pattern associated with causative verbs; only the Dutch mirative PLI has the option of also taking a clausal complement. This criterion, then, particularly suggests that there may be different grammaticalisation speeds in play for Afrikaans and Dutch PLIs.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that the PLI-*laat/laten* ‘let’ has undergone grammaticalisation in Afrikaans and Dutch. I illustrated this by drawing on the grammaticalisation criteria used by Van Craenenbroeck and Van Koppen (2015, 2017) in their work on perception and causative verbs in Dutch. I have shown that the development of the PLI constructions is consistent with a process often viewed as ‘internal’. Furthermore, it is a well-established fact that imperative-like *let* often undergoes grammaticalisation (see Aikhenvald 2010 and Kuteva et al. 2019). In addition to the grammaticalisation facts, I have also shown that Afrikaans PLIs appear to have grammaticalised further than their Dutch counterparts, and I have suggested that language contact may have played a role in the speed at which these constructions developed in the two languages. Therefore, both internal changes and language contact may have played a role in the development of PLI constructions in Afrikaans and Dutch.

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