

Super mais alors super intéressant !
**Reduplicative coordination constructions with
an intensifying meaning in French and Dutch**

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Research project

- Interdisciplinary Seminar on Construction Grammar, funded by the *MESHS* (2011-2012)
- Continuation of the project in two thematic subgroups:
 - 1. Eng. *let alone* / Du. *laat staan* / Fr. *encore moins*
 - 2. Fr. *X mais alors X'* / Du. *X maar dan ook X'*

Outline

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Dutch *X maar dan ook X'* (MDO)
- 3. French *X mais alors X'* (MA)
- 4. Comparison MDO/MA
- 5. Conclusions

1. Introduction

1.1. Some examples

- Reduplication pattern with an intensifying function in (informal/spoken) Fr and Du:

- Fr. *X mais alors X'* (MA) (lit. X but then X')

(1) *Je ne comprends pas les Wallons mais alors pas du tout* (Valibel) 'lit. I don't understand the Walloons but then not at all'

- Du. *X maar dan ook X'* (MDO) (lit. X but then also X')

(2) *Wij hebben alles maar dan ook alles gedaan om die mensen goed te begeleiden* (CGN) 'lit. We have done everything but then also everything to guide these people appropriately'

1.2. Theoretical background

● Construction Grammar (a.o. Goldberg 1995, 2006, Croft 2001)

- constructions are "conventionalized pairings of form and meaning" (Goldberg 2006:3)
- Dutch X MDO X' is considered a construction by Hoeksema (2001)

⇒ Research questions:

- Can we find additional evidence for this constructional analysis of X MDO X'?
- Does this constructional analysis also hold for French X MA X'?

● Preliminaries:

- X MA X' and X MDO X' seem to act as semi-schematic constructions
- Form: fixed sequence MA/MDO + variable parts X and X'
- Meaning: not (entirely) predictable intensifying value

⇒ intensifying MA/MDO CXs should be distinguished from their compositional equivalents ("opposition" + "temporal"/"consequence"):

(3) *Pour éviter de souffrir, on ne doit pas aimer, mais alors on souffre de ne pas aimer* (web) 'To avoid suffering, one should not love, but then one suffers from the lack of love'

(4) *Je kunt dan verbinden tegen lagere kosten maar dan ook lagere bandbreedte natuurlijk* (COW) 'Then you can connect at lower costs, but then also (with) lower band width of course'

1.3. Methodology

- Formal and functional analysis of X MDO/MA X'
- Comparative and corpus-based approach
 - Fr:
 - 100 occ. of (non-compositional) MA found with Google
 - 50 occ. of (non-compositional) MA in Frantext
 - non-systematic analysis of Valibel occ. (spoken Belgian French)
 - prosodic experiment
 - Du:
 - 130 occ. of (non-compositional) MDO in COW
 - non-systematic analysis of CGN occ. (spoken Dutch)

2. Dutch MDO

2.1. State of the art

- ◉ Hoeksema (2001): "emphatic reduplicative coordination"

- "emphasis" equated with (qualitative / quantitative) intensifying value
- reduplication often associated with intensifying value:

(5) Fr. *Il est très très (très) malin* 'lit. He is very very cunning'

(6) Du. *Het regende en regende* 'lit. It rained and rained'

(7) Eng. *For years and years this has been a problem*

(8) Yoruba (West-Africa) *múra kíá kíá* 'to get prepared very quickly'

◉ Main characteristics MDO (Hoeksema 2001):

- ✓ MDO is non-compositional
- ✓ MDO coordinates two similar (if not identical) items

(9) *Ik wil alles maar dan ook alles zien* 'lit. I want to see everything but then also everything'

- ✓ X in X MDO X' is usually inherently emphatic (universal quantifier, degree adverbial)

(10) *We vonden 't heel maar dan ook heel spannend* 'lit. We found it very but then also very exciting'

- ✓ X is mostly a single lexical item
- ✓ X' is often preceded by a degree adverb (Y)

(11) *Hij kan niets maar dan ook echt niets* 'lit. he can't do anything but then also really anything'

◉ Additional observations (Cappelle 2012):

- ✓ degree adverbial Y may precede X

(12) *helemaal niets maar dan ook niets* 'lit. completely anything but then also anything'

- ✓ MDO may be compositional

- metalinguistic interpretation: 'I say X, *but* if I say X *then* I *also* mean X'
- cf. first occurrences observed by Hoeksema (1917, 1918) contain *letterlijk* 'literally' before X'

- ✓ parts of words may be reduplicated

- compound members / prefixoids:

(13) *ape- maar dan ook apetrots* 'lit. monkey- but then also monkey-proud'

- non-morphemic sequences:

(14) *iede- maar dan ook iedereen* 'lit. eve- but then also everybody'

2.2. Syntactic nature of X and X'

- X = universal pronominal quantifier (72,31%)

- mostly negative value (57,69%)

(15) *Er zat **niets**, maar dan ook **niets** menselijks bij.* 'lit. There was nothing, but then also nothing human about it.'

- positive value (14,62%)

(16) ***Overal**, maar dan ook letterlijk **overal**, staan meisjes te dansen op de bar.* 'lit. Everywhere, but then also literally everywhere girls were dancing on the bar top'

- X = degree adverb (13,85%)

(17) ***verschrikkelijk**, maar dan ook **verschrikkelijk** aanbevolen!* 'lit. terribly, but then also terribly recommended!'

- Other categories of X (<4,00%), not observed by Hoeksema (2001): Adj, NP, VP, PP, word part

2.3. X and X' are +/- identical

● Reduplication (93,85%)

a. exact reduplication (41,33%):

(18) *j vergist j heel flink in de lego markt, maar dan ook heel flink.* 'lit. you're very badly mistaken in the lego market, but then also very badly.'

b. with addition of a degree adverb Y (27,69%)

(19) *De stylisten van alle, maar dan ook echt alle Oost-Europese deelnemers pakten groots uit qua stofgebruik.* 'lit. The stylists of all, but then also really all Eastern European participants pushed the boat out in their use of fabrics.'

c. with "delayed" addition (24,82%):

(20) *Dan moet je toch helemaal knetter maar dan ook knettergek zijn.* 'lit. Then you have to be completely raving but then also raving mad'

2.4. X and X' are different

- Reformulation (3,85%)

(21) *Ik heb gisteren 3 postings geplaatst [sic] met dezelfde opmerkingen, maar dan ook letterlijk hun woorden gekopieerd en geplakt* 'lit. Yesterday I have posted 3 postings with the same observations, but then also literally their words copied and pasted'

- Incomplete reduplication/ellipsis (2,31%)

(22) *Maar dat hysterische subcultuurtje heeft echt niks, maar dan ook niks te maken met de klassieke musicals uit Hollywood.* 'But that hysterical subculture has really nothing, but then also nothing to do with the classical musicals from Hollywood'

→ cf. Cappelle (2012)

2.5. Constructional preferences

- X = non gradable (~ 90%):

- universal (pronominal) quantifiers (*niets* 'nothing', *nooit* 'never', *alles* 'everything', *geen enkele* 'none', etc.)
- (high/absolute) degree adverbials (*veel* 'a lot', *volledig* 'completely', etc.)
- superlative expressions (*het enige* 'the only')

⇒ Constructional specialization :

- MDO used to put emphasis on elements that already indicate a high/absolute degree
- even more pronounced tendency compared to Hoeksema's diachronic study
 - X = universal quantifier: 57,57% in Hoeksema → 75,38% in COW ($p < 0.001$)

3. French MA

3.1. Syntactic nature of X and X'

- More categorial variation; most important categories:
 - Adj/AdjP (26,25%)

(23) *La route est longue... mais alors très longue* 'lit. The road is long...but then very long'
 - V/VP (22,00%)

(24) *J'ai décidé de ne plus dormir, mais alors plus dormir une seconde* 'lit. I have decided not to sleep anymore, but then not to sleep a single second anymore'
 - Adv/AdvP (16,87%)

(25) *Miss Pérou est loin mais alors très loin d'être moche* 'Miss Peru is far but then very far from being ugly'
 - NP (16,25%)

(26) *Ils aimaient mieux débiter des conneries, mais alors, des conneries !* 'lit. They liked more to talk bullshit, but then, bullshit!'

3.2. X and X' are +/- identical

○ Reduplication

a. exact reduplication (6,25%)

(27) *Je suis **déçu** mais alors **déçu*** 'lit. I am disappointed but then disappointed'

b. with "delayed" addition (31,25%)

(28) *J'ai vu un **très** mais alors **très gros camion*** 'I have seen a very but then very big truck'

c. with addition of a degree adverb Y (52,50%)

(29) *Un cadeau à **petit** budget (mais alors tout petit !!!)* 'lit. A present at low budget price (but then very low!!!)'

d. double reduplication (4,40%)

(30) *Blocage **complet**, mais alors complet complet* 'lit. complete blockade, but then complete complete'

3.3. X and X' are different

- Incomplete reduplication/ellipsis (44,40%)

(31) *GROS GROS* mais alors *gros* problème 'lit. BIG BIG but then big problem'

(32) *Je vous avais prévenus: deux cons !* mais alors *ø*
heureux... heureux... 'lit. (...) two fools ! but then happy... happy...'

- Reformulation (6,90%)

(33) *j'en avais vraiment rien à foutre* *des cheveux blancs de Marie-Antoinette...* Mais alors ... *rien à taper* 'lit. I couldn't care less about the white hair of Marie-Antoinette... But then couldn't give a fig.'

3.4. The role of prosody

● Pilot study:

- recorded in Lille (U. Lille 3) with an Edirol R1
 - 5 speakers of French
 - 4 females, 1 male
 - 4 French (North), 1 Belgian
 - graduate students, admin. staff
 - 21 > 45 (mean: ~28)

21

Vous parlez à votre ami Laurent de Marie, une amie que vous avez perdue de vue :

"Ah, si tu l'avais connue, la fameuse Marie... Elle était géniale, mais alors GENIALE, hein ! Tu n'en serais pas revenu."

You're speaking to your friend Laurent about Mary, a former friend:

"Ah! If only you knew her, the famous Mary... She was awesome, but then AWESOME, huh ! You would not have believed her."

● Procedure:

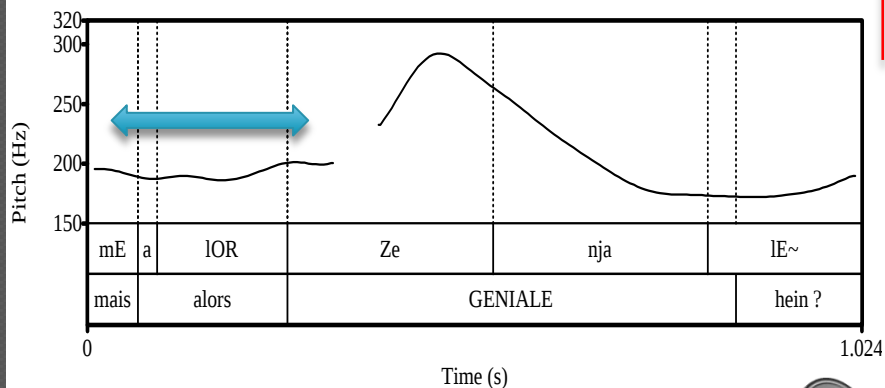
- The subjects were asked to read sentences in dialogues (cf. (blue) text in 21) – the context was read by the experimenter
- 87 sentences ("mais alors" = 18; 69 distractors), semi-random order, 1 iteration | ~20 min; only intensifying (non-compositional) MA
- "mais alors" parameters: number of syllables of the following word, position, category, addition of "vraiment", etc.
- Speakers were asked to speak a colloquial French; repetitions were allowed/requested, in case of mistakes, sputtering

● Preliminary results:

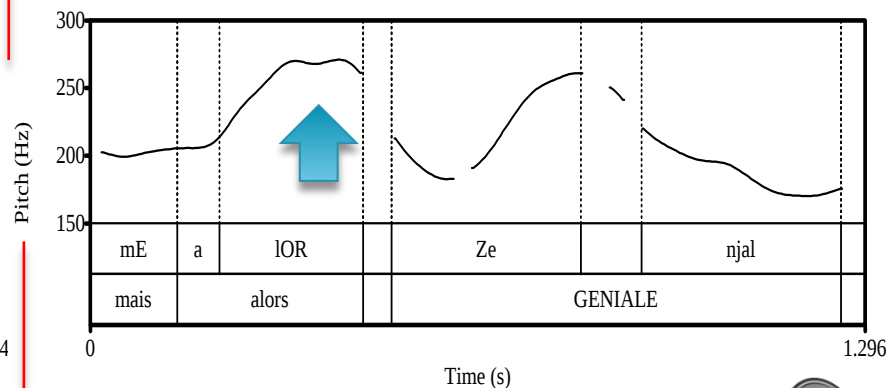
(1) The 'mais alors' part is not consistent

- A: The 'mais alors' sequence is produced by some speakers with a low and flat F0, and usually with an increased tempo and a small intensity (> the expected realization)
- B: The syllable [lɔʁ] is prominent – high and intense – in other speakers
- Cf. *Elle était géniale, mais alors GENIALE (hein ?)* 'she was awesome, but then AWESOME' by S2 (A) – illustrating the former strategy - and S1 (B) – illustrating the latter

A



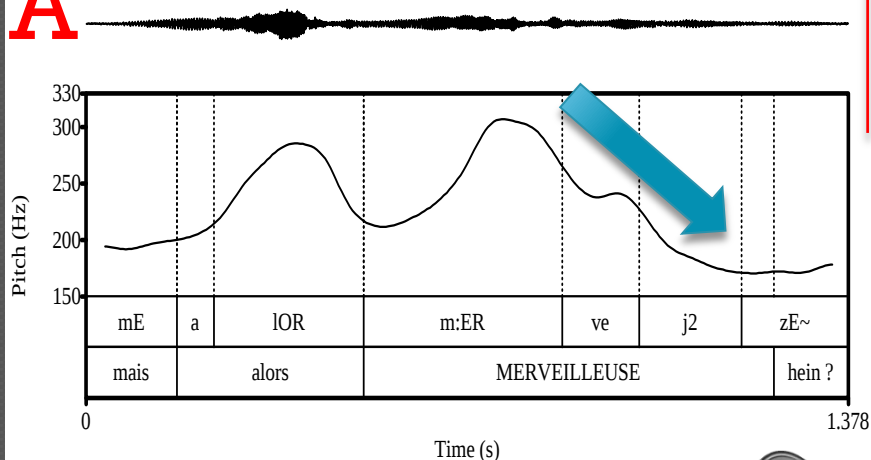
B



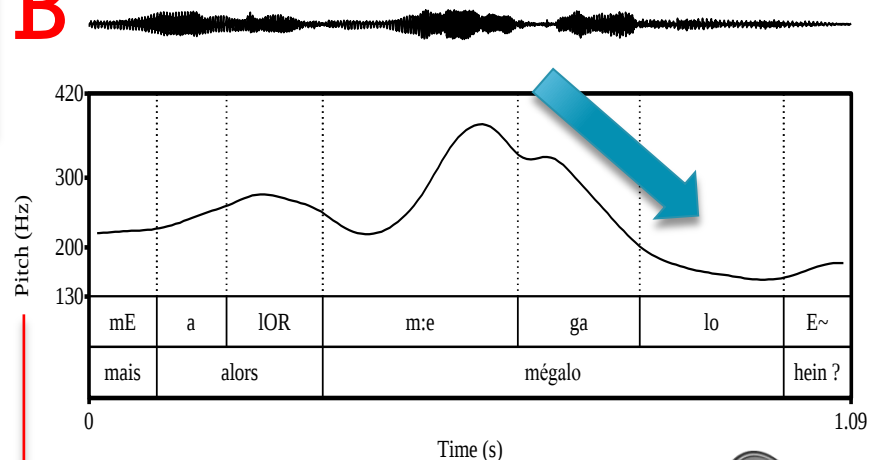
◉ (2) The 'X' part is consistent

- For all speakers, there is a sharp decrease of the F0, starting from a (super-)high on the first syllable (usually acute and intense) to a low on the last (HL on a monosyllabic)
- The initial consonant is usually lengthened
- Cf. *Elle était merveilleuse, mais alors MERVEILLEUSE* (hein ?) 'she was wonderful, but then WONDERFUL (huh?)' by S1 (A)
- Cf. *Elle était mégalomanie, mais alors MEGALO* (hein ?) 'she was megalomaniac, but then MEGALOMANIAC (huh?)' by S3 (B)

A



B



3.5. Constructional preferences

- Preference for gradable lexemes (60,65%)

(34) *Quelques grandes (mais alors vraiment grandes) copines...* 'lit. Some close (but then really close) friends'

- Non gradable elements : two cases

1. X = (mostly negative) universal quantifier / degree Adv / non-gradable Adj

(35) *Ne jamais, mais alors jamais leur donner à manger après minuit* 'lit. Never, but then never (...)'

(36) *Mon Mac Os X délire COMPLETEMENT, mais alors complètement* 'lit. (...) completely, but then completely'

(37) *Défragmentation impossible, mais alors complètement impossible* 'lit. defragmentation impossible, but then completely impossible'

2. X = (non-gradable) NP

- (38) *peut-être des espèces de rateaux, mais alors très longs* 'lit. possibly a kind of rakes, but then not very long (ones)'
- (39) *un plâtrier, mais alors un qui ne fait que le plâtre* 'lit. a plasterer, but then one who only does plasterwork'

- X' adds a precision about X (often ellipsed)
- not an intensifying, but a specifying interpretation

3.6. Analysis of X MA X'

Two subconstructions in French:

(1) Intensifying MA construction

- ✓ X is gradable or non gradable
- ✓ intensification markers: degree adverbs, double reduplication, exclamative modality, etc.

(40) *Il n'a rien vu venir mais alors rien du tout* 'lit. He didn't see anything coming, but then anything at all'

(41) *Loin, mais alors très loin d'un 5 étoiles* 'lit. Far, but then very far from a five star (hotel)'

(42) *marre mais alors marre!!* 'lit. enough but then enough!!'

(2) Specifying MA construction

- ✓ X = non gradable (generally N/NP)
- ✓ X' specifies the meaning of X
- ✓ different prosody?

(43) *Y a peut-être des armes par-ci par-là, mais alors des pas déclarées.* 'lit. Maybe there are some weapons here and there, but then not declared (ones)'

Remark: Dutch would use here 'X maar dan wel X' (lit. X but then well X') instead of 'X maar dan ook X'

(44) *Er zijn misschien hier en daar wapens, maar dan wel niet-aangegeven wapens.*

One pragmatico-discursive function

- Both subconstructions have a focalizing function:
 - what is expressed after MA is the rhematic part of the expression (the most informative part)
- Confirmed by:
 - ✓ possible ellipsis of the thematic part:

(45) *Je vous avais prévenus: deux cons ! mais alors $\emptyset$ heureux... heureux...* 'lit. (...) two fools ! but then happy... happy...'
 - ✓ possible delayed addition of the rhematic part (endfocus):

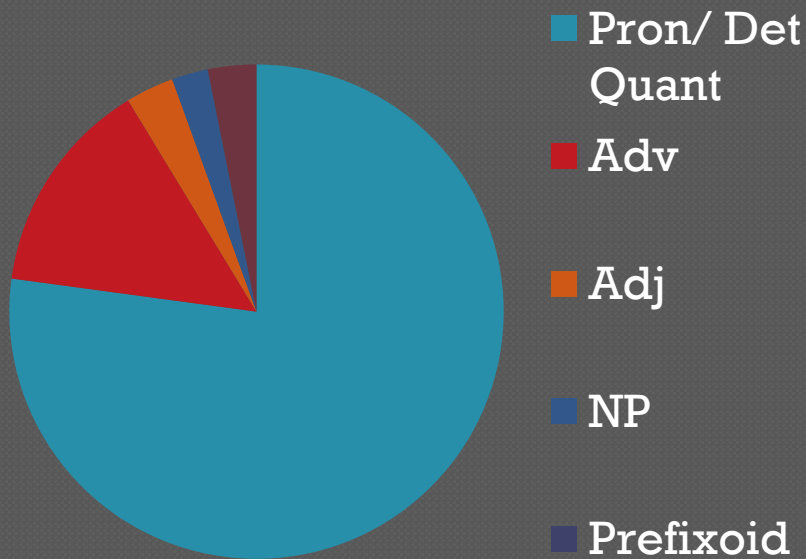
(46) *Il est complètement mais alors complètement HS* 'lit. he is completely but then completely disabled'

4. Comparison MDO/MA

Comparison categories of X

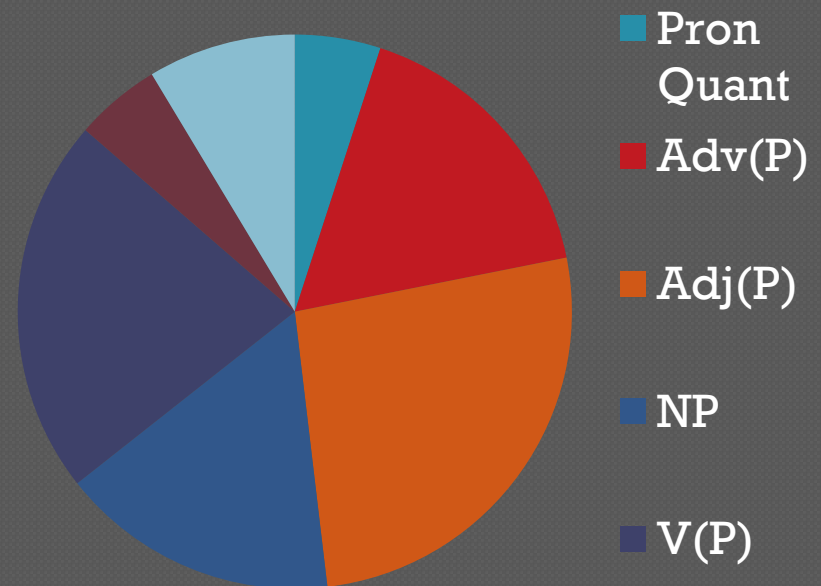
DUTCH

X MDO X'



FRENCH

X MA X'



Comparison MDO/MA

DUTCH MDO	FRENCH MA
•Restricted categorial variability of X •Outspoken preference for non-gradable X (about 90%) •Mostly (exact) reduplication (>93%) •(More) uniformal form-meaning mapping (MDO ~ intensifying function)	•More categorial variation of X •X can be gradable or non-gradable •Less cases of (exact) reduplication (49%); more ellipsis •Two subconstructions (intensifying / specifying)

⇒ MDO: high degree of constructionalization

⇒ MA: less advanced degree of constructionalization?

5. Conclusions

Conclusions

- French and Dutch share an intensifying reduplication construction: MA/MDO
 - non-compositional
 - X often inherently intensifying
 - intensity often reinforced by a degree adverb
- French: second focalizing MA construction with a specifying function (~ Dutch MDW)
 - ⇒ French: one form (MA) covers two subconstructions (intensifying / specifying)
 - ⇒ in Dutch: two independent forms (MDO/MDW) corresponding to two different constructions

6. References

References

- Cappelle, B. 2012. Alles- maar dan ook allesbehalve grammaticaal, of hele- maar dan ook helemaal niks mis mee? *Over Taal* 51:3. 66-67.
- Croft, W. 2001. *Radical Construction Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldberg, A. 1995. *Constructions. A Construction Grammar approach to argument structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldberg, A. 2006. *Constructions at Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoeksema, J. 2001. *X maar dan ook echt X!* : een geval van emphatische reduplicerende nevenschikking. *Tabu* 31: $\frac{3}{4}$. 119-140.

Corpora

- COW (Corpora from the Web): <http://hpsg.fu-berlin.de/cow/colibri/>
- CGN (Corpus Gesproken Nederlands): <http://lands.let.ru.nl/cgn/>
- Frantext: <http://www.frantext.fr/>
- Valibel: <http://www.uclouvain.be/valibel-corpus.html>