

The constructional status of “nominative and infinitives” in Dutch

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This paper deals with the Dutch verb pattern exemplified in (1) to (3), in which a passive matrix verb (in italics) is combined with a subject and an infinitival complement.

- (1) Ze werden populair bij atleten en wielrenners omdat meer rode bloedlichaampjes *worden geacht* een ‘zuurstofvoorsprong’ te geven. (ConDiv *NRC_VARIA01*)
‘They [EPO hormones] became popular with athletes and cyclists because more redblood cells are thought to give an “oxygen advantage”.’
- (2) Een abt *wordt verondersteld* in zijn abdij te vertoeven. (ConDiv *GVA2*)
‘An abbot is supposed to reside in his abbey.’
- (3) De labresultaten *worden verwacht* klaar te zijn eind oktober. (ConDiv *LN_ALL*)
‘The lab results are expected to be ready by the end of October.’

This so-called “nominative and infinitive” (or NCI) constitutes a small but remarkable ingredient in the grammar of Present-day Dutch, because the corresponding active pattern, the accusative and infinitive (or ACI), exemplified for *achten* ‘consider, think’ in the 18th-Century example in (4), is long obsolete. In the early stages of Modern Dutch the ACI could be productively combined with all kinds of verbs of perception, cognition and utterance – much like in Present-day English – but this is no longer the case today (cf. Fischer 1994).

- (4) Praat me niet van Vriendschap; hoorde ik onlangs iemand zeggen, dien men *acht* de Waereld wel te kennen. (*De Denker*, c. 1770)
‘Don’t speak to me of friendship, I recently heard somebody say, whom one considers to be well acquainted with the ways of the world.’

In the grammar of English, the NCI is usually treated as merely the passive variant of the ACI. Noël (2001), however, has argued that the NCI can instantiate several constructions, with specific semantic properties which cannot be reduced to the combined meanings of the ACI and the general passive construction. Patterns like *be said to* and *be believed to*, for instance, are frequently used as evidentiality markers and the patterns *be expected to* and *be supposed to* have also developed deontic meanings. The facts of the Dutch NCI provide additional support for such an analysis. We shall investigate the lexical scope of the NCI constructions in Present-day Dutch and the immediately preceding periods, provide an analysis of their constructional semantics, and look into their synchronic and diachronic relation with the ACI.

References

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