
Revisiting object drop and extraposition in Dutch imperatives

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1 Introduction

- Dutch is an OV-language — as a rule, nominal objects occur before, not after, the verb
- (1) a. hij heeft ⟨die bal⟩ neergelegd ⟨*die bal⟩
he has that ball down.put.PTC that ball
‘he put that ball down’
b. hij wilde ⟨die bal⟩ neerleggen ⟨*die bal⟩
he wanted that ball down.put.INF that ball
‘he wanted to put that ball down’
- Dutch does not generally allow objects to be dropped (see (2)), and also does not show a word-order alternation in verb–particle constructions of the English type in (3): the only grammatical output in (4) is the one with the object appearing before the particle
- (2) hij legde *(die bal) neer
he put that ball down
- (3) he put ⟨that ball⟩ down ⟨that ball⟩
- (4) hij legde ⟨die bal⟩ neer ⟨*die bal⟩
he put that ball down that ball

- but in its finite and infinitival imperatives,¹ Dutch allows the object to extrapose into the right periphery, as in (5a), or even to be dropped altogether, as (5b) shows

(5)	FINITE IMPERATIVE	INFINITIVAL IMPERATIVE
a.	leg <die bal> (niet) neer < <u>die bal</u> >! put that ball not down that ball	(niet) neerleggen <u>die bal</u> ! not down.put.INF that ball
b.	leg (niet) neer! put not down all: '(don't) put it/that ball down!'	(niet) neerleggen! not down.put.INF

¹ What I am calling the 'infinitival imperative' of Dutch is variably referred to as '*infinitivus pro imperativo*' (Blom 1987, Kirsner 2003), 'directive infinitive' (Dutch: 'directieve infinitief'; Fortuin 2003) and 'imperative infinitive' (Dutch: 'imperativische infinitief'; Onrust 1996, Van Olmen 2009). It certainly is not the case that any regular imperative can be replaced with an infinitival counterpart or *vice versa*. The distribution of modal particles in the regular and infinitival imperative is different as well. For relevant discussion, see Fortuin (2003) and Van Olmen (2009); also cf. Gärtner (2017). Since the form is unquestionably infinitival and since its illocutionary force is by and large on a par with that of imperatives proper (the semantic difference between the two is subtle and difficult to make precise), I will continue to avail myself here (as in Den Dikken 1992) of the term 'infinitival imperative'.

- Den Dikken (1992) was the first to present a detailed analysis of the facts in (5), mobilising empty operator movement (EOM)

(6) $[_{\text{MoodP}} Op_{\text{Obj}} [_{\text{Mood}}[_{\text{IMP}}] \dots [_{\text{vP}} \text{leg } t_{\text{Obj}} \text{neer}]]]$ (die bal)

- object drop in imperatives licenses a parasitic gap: (7) (Den Dikken 1992)
- movement of the null operator Op_{Obj} in (6) facilitates the parasitic gap in the object-drop versions of (7)

(7) a. $\text{leg } [_{\text{zonder } pg \text{ in te kijken}}] \text{neer } (\text{dat boek})!$
 put without PG in to look down that book
 b. $[_{\text{zonder } pg \text{ in te kijken}}] \text{neerleggen } (\text{dat boek})!$
 without PG in to look down.put.INF that book
 both: ‘put that book down without looking inside *(it)!’

- a parasitic gap is licensed in the extraposition variants of (7) as well (Den Dikken 1992)
- some form of \bar{A} -movement is operative there, too

- further support for the involvement of \bar{A} -movement comes from the contrast between direct and indirect objects of double object constructions as undergoers (Den Dikken 1992)
- (8)
- a. geef hem [zonder *pg* in te kijken] door (dat boek)!
give him without PG in to look through that book
'hand that book over to him without looking inside it!'
 - b. *geef het [zonder *pg* aan te kijken] door (die jongen)!
give it without PG on to look through that boy
'hand it over to that boy without looking at him!'

This contrast parallels the one found in the well-established EOM case of *tough*-movement:

- (9)
- a. een kleurboek is leuk om (aan) kleine kinderen te geven
a colouring.book is nice COMP to little children to give
'a colouring book is nice to give to little children'
 - b. ??kleine kinderen zijn leuk om een kleurboek te geven
little children are nice COMP a colouring.book to give

- **THIS PAPER:**
 - confirmation of the EOM analysis for object drop (related to topic drop in non-imperative contexts; see (10B))
 - object extraposition in finite imperatives does not involve EOM, instead being a combination of clause-internal leftward movement of the object and remnant VP fronting (11)
- (10) A: mag ik u deze bal aanbieden?
 may I you this ball offer
 ‘may I offer you this ball?’
 B: (die bal) heb ik al
 that ball have I already
 ‘I have it already’
- (11) $[[_{VP} \text{ leg } t_{Obj} \text{ neer}] [\text{Obj} \dots [t_{VP}]]]$

2 Object drop and extraposition with P-stranding

- Den Dikken (1992): P-stranding under extraposition is impossible in finite imperatives (12a) but grammatical in infinitival ones (12b)
- novel observation: finite imperatives do sanction P-stranding under object drop: (12a')

- (12)
- a. *denk maar niet meer over na dat probleem!
think but not anymore about PRT that problem
 - a'. denk (er) maar niet meer over na!
think it_[+R] but not anymore about PRT
 - b. niet meer over nadenken (dat probleem)!
not anymore about PRT.think that problem
'don't think about it/that problem anymore!'

- EOM can strand prepositions in Dutch: (13)
- but clause-internal movement ('scrambling') of the complement of P is normally successful only if that complement is a so-called 'R-pronoun' (Van Riemsdijk 1978) — *er* 'it_[+R]' in (14c)

(13) dit is moeilijk om over te praten
 this is difficult COMP about to talk
 'this is tough to talk about'

- (14) a. ik heb niet over dit probleem nagedacht
 I have not about this problem PRT.thought
 'I haven't thought about this problem'
- b. *ik heb dit probleem niet over nagedacht
 I have this problem not about PRT.thought
- c. ik heb *er* niet over nagedacht
 I have it_[+R] not about PRT.thought

- object extraposition in finite imperatives does **not** involve EOM — if it did, (12a) ought to be just as good as (12b) with object drop
- (12)
- a. *denk maar niet meer over na dat probleem!
think but not anymore about PRT that problem
 - a'. denk (er) maar niet meer over na!
think it_[+R] but not anymore about PRT
 - b. niet meer over nadenken (dat probleem)!
not anymore about PRT.think that problem
'don't think about it/that problem anymore!'

3 Object drop and extraposition in past-tense imperatives

- object extraposition is possible in past-tense imperatives (15) but object drop is not (16)

- (15) soms had de scheidsrechter een slechte bui
sometimes had the referee a bad mood
'sometimes the referee was in a bad mood'
- a. legde dan maar liever meteen neer die bal!
put.PST then rather at.once down that ball
'then you'd better put that ball right down'
- b. *legde dan maar liever meteen neer!
put.PST then rather at.once down
- (16) je wist toch dat de scheidsrechter een slechte bui had
you knew after.all that the referee a bad mood had
'you knew the referee was in a bad mood'
- a. had dan ook meteen neergelegd die bal!
had.PST then also at.once down.put.PTC that ball
'so you should've put that ball down right away'
- b. *had dan ook meteen neergelegd!
had.PST then also at.once down.put.PTC

- that object drop is impossible in past-tense imperatives can be understood if such object drop involves movement of a null operator, interfered with by the null temporal operator for anteriority (Op_{Ante}) in TP

(17) $*[Op_{Obj} [_{TP} Op_{Ante} [_{VP} \text{legde } t_{Obj} \text{ neer}]]]$

- that object extraposition IS possible in past-tense imperatives means that Op_{Ante} does not give rise to an intervention effect here
- this further confirms that no EOM is involved in the derivation of object extraposition

4 Object drop and extraposition in past-participial imperatives

- Dutch has a limited range of past-participial imperatives: Rooryck & Postma (2007)

(18) a. opgepast!
up.watch.PTC
‘watch out!’

b. opgesodemieterd!
up.sodomise.PTC
‘sod/bugger off!’

- Rooryck & Postma (2007) do not mention that participial imperatives can be transitive, and that when this is the case, they can feature both object drop and object extraposition

(19) a. en nou neergelegd (die bal)!
and now down.put.PTCP that ball
‘put down that ball right now!’

b. en nou weggegooid (die rotzooi)!
and nou away.thrown that rubbish
‘throw away that rubbish right now!’

- for the syntax of past-participial imperatives, Rooryck & Postma (2007) postulate a silent deontic obligation modal (see also Kayne 1992 and Zanuttini 1994 on a silent modal in Italian negative infinitival imperatives)
- Rooryck & Postma (2007) take participial imperatives to involve movement of the participial phrase into SpecCP
- this would illegally traverse Op_{Obj} , for which Den Dikken (1992) argues that it occupies SpecMoodP

(20) $*[_{CP} [_{VP} t_{Obj} \text{ neergelegd}] [_{MoodP} Op_{Obj} \dots t_{VP}]]$

- (21) instead features movement of the past-participial VP to the specifier of the Mod(al)P projected by the silent deontic obligation modal

(21) $[_{\text{MoodP}} \textit{Op}_{\text{Obj}} \dots [_{\text{ModP}} [_{\text{VP}} t_{\text{Obj}} \textit{V}] [_{\text{Mod}}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]} (\dots) [_{\text{vP}} \dots t_{\text{VP}}]]]]]$

- VP movement in (21) is not interfered with by the null operator of object-drop imperatives
- VP movement also does not inhibit clause-internal movement of the object to the edge of vP
- the combination of VP movement to SpecModP and object movement to the edge of vP delivers object extraposition

(22) $[_{\text{ModP}} [_{\text{VP}} t_{\text{Obj}} \textit{V}] [_{\text{Mod}}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]} (\dots) [_{\text{vP}} [_{\text{Obj}} \textit{die bal}] [_{\text{vP}} \dots t_{\text{VP}}]]]]]$

5 Object extraposition, object shift and scrambling

- movement of the object to the edge of vP is an instance of ‘object shift’
 - object shift is the privilege of nominal elements that are in a case dependency with v , the assigner of accusative case
 - in Dutch double object constructions the direct object (Theme) is case-dependent on v ; the indirect object (Goal) is not accusative-marked by v , hence cannot be promoted to subject in the passive (**kleine kinderen worden vaak snoep gegeven* ‘little children are often candy given’)
 - indirect object extraposition is impossible because the indirect object cannot shift to the edge of vP , rendering the derivation in (22) unavailable
- (8)
- a. geef hem [zonder *pg* in te kijken] door (dat boek)!
give him without PG in to look through that book
‘hand that book over to him without looking inside it!’
 - b. *geef het [zonder *pg* aan te kijken] door (die jongen)!
give it without PG on to look through that boy
‘hand it over to that boy without looking at him!’

- object extraposition licenses a parasitic gap.

(23) en nou [zonder *pg* in te kijken] weggelegd dat boek!
 and now without PG in to look away.put.PTC that book
 ‘and now put away that book without looking into it!’

- apart from object shift, Dutch also has ‘scrambling’, allowing the object to traverse *vP*-external adverbial material
- scrambling is known to license parasitic gaps (see Bennis & Hoekstra 1984 for Dutch, Felix 1983 for German)

(24) dat ik dat boek gisteren [zonder *pg* in te kijken] heb weggegooid
 that I that book yesterday without PG in to look have away.thrown.PTC
 ‘that I threw that book away yesterday without looking inside it’

- after landing on the edge of *vP*, the accusative object has the opportunity to scramble to a position between *ModP* and *vP* whence it can c-command and license a parasitic gap

6 Object drop and extraposition in verb-initial indicatives

- an interesting spin-off for indicative clauses: object extraposition is possible here precisely in the presence of deontic obligation modality

- (25)
- a. zal ik over nadenken ?*(,) dat probleem
will I about PRT.think that problem
'I'll think about it, that problem'
 - b. wil ik niet over nadenken ?*(,) dat probleem
want I not about PRT.think that problem
'I don't wanna think about it, that problem'
 - c. moet je eens over nadenken (,) dat probleem
must you sometime about PRT.think that problem
'you gotta think about that problem sometime'

7 Object drop and extraposition in conditional imperatives

- in *disjunctive* (26), *die bal* ‘that ball’ is both extraposable and omissible
 - in *conjunctive* (27), extraposition is impossible while object drop is fine
- (26) a. leg ⟨die bal⟩ neer ⟨die bal⟩ of ik schiet
put that ball down that ball or I shoot
‘put that ball down or I’ll shoot; you must put that ball down or else I’ll shoot’
- b. leg neer of ik schiet
put down or I shoot
- (27) a. leg ⟨die bal⟩ neer ⟨*die bal⟩ en ik schiet
put that ball down that ball and I shoot
‘put that ball down and I’ll shoot; if you put that ball down, I’ll shoot’
- b. leg neer en ik schiet
put down and I shoot

- that extraposition is possible in (26a) but not in (27a) follows if the syntax of the first disjunct of conditional disjunctions contains $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]}$ whereas the first conjunct of conditional conjunctions does not²
- it is $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]}$ that facilitates clause-internal movement of VP around the shifted object

- (26) a. leg ⟨die bal⟩ neer ⟨die bal⟩ of ik schiet
 put that ball down that ball or I shoot
 ‘put that ball down or I’ll shoot; you must put that ball down or else I’ll shoot’
 b. leg neer of ik schiet
 put down or I shoot
- (27) a. leg ⟨die bal⟩ neer ⟨*die bal⟩ en ik schiet
 put that ball down that ball and I shoot
 ‘put that ball down and I’ll shoot; if you put that ball down, I’ll shoot’
 b. leg neer en ik schiet
 put down and I shoot

2 The idea that disjunctive (26) involves a silent modal while conjunctive (27) does not is in step with the English paraphrases of these imperatives. While (26a) can be rendered as ‘you must put that ball down or else I’ll shoot’, for (27a) no deontic modality is involved in the natural paraphrase ‘if you put that ball down, I’ll shoot’.

- EOM is not dependent on $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]}$: Op_{Obj} lands in the specifier of $\text{MoodP}_{[\text{Imp}]}$, not ModP
 - EOM to SpecMoodP is also not interfered with by the conditional operator Op_{Cond} , which finds itself in the CP domain, farther up than MoodP
- (26) a. leg $\langle \text{die bal} \rangle$ neer $\langle \text{die bal} \rangle$ of ik schiet
 put that ball down that ball or I shoot
 ‘put that ball down or I’ll shoot; you must put that ball down or else I’ll shoot’
 b. leg neer of ik schiet
 put down or I shoot
- (27) a. leg $\langle \text{die bal} \rangle$ neer $\langle * \text{die bal} \rangle$ en ik schiet
 put that ball down that ball and I shoot
 ‘put that ball down and I’ll shoot; if you put that ball down, I’ll shoot’
 b. leg neer en ik schiet
 put down and I shoot

- the infinitival versions of (26) are fine (see (28)), those of (27) are altogether impossible, regardless of whether the object is pronounced or, if it is, where *die bal* is placed: (29)
- (28) a. ⟨die bal⟩ neerleggen ⟨die bal⟩ of ik schiet
that ball down.put.INF that ball or I shoot
b. neerleggen of ik schiet
down.put.INF or I shoot
- (29) a. *⟨die bal⟩ neerleggen ⟨die bal⟩ en ik schiet
that ball down.put.INF that ball and I shoot
b. *neerleggen en ik schiet
down.put.INF and I shoot
- Dutch has no infinitival conditionals
 - infinitival imperatives are licensed only in the presence of $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]}$
 - $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]}$ is present in the syntax of conditional *disjunction* constructions but absent from the *conjunction* cases
- all versions of their infinitival counterparts in (29) are ungrammatical

- the distribution of object extraposition in these examples is *inversely* correlated with the distribution of negative polarity items (NPIs) in conditional con/disjunction constructions³

(30) *budge an inch or I'll shoot
 *'you must budge an inch, or else I'll shoot'

(31) budge an inch and I'll shoot
 'if you budge an inch, I'll shoot'

- the contrast between (30) and (31) follows straightforwardly if the syntax and semantics of (30) are conditional while those of (31) are not (involving $\text{Mod}_{[\text{deontic}:\Box]}$ instead)
- conditionals are a downward-entailing environment in which NPIs thrive; constructions with deontic modality, on the other hand, are not conducive to NPI-licensing

³ The example in (28) was taken from Keshet & Medeiros (2019). They do not observe that (27) is ungrammatical.

8 Object drop and extraposition in imperatives with overt subjects

- Dutch imperatives, finite and infinitival, can have an overt subject in the right periphery

(32) sodomieteer op jij/jullie!
sodomise up you_{SG/PL}

(33) opsodemieteren jij/jullie!
up.sodomise.INF you_{SG/PL}
both: 'sod/bugger off you (guys)!'

- co-occurrence of both an object and a subject in the right periphery produces a fixed order, both in finite and in infinitival imperatives: (34b) and (35b) are ungrammatical without comma intonation

(34) a. leg neer die bal jij/jullie!
put.SG down that ball you_{SG/PL}
b. *leg neer jij/jullie die bal!
put.SG down you_{SG/PL} that ball

(35) a. neerleggen die bal jij/jullie!
down.put.INF that ball you_{SG/PL}
b. *neerleggen jij/jullie die bal!
down.put.INF you_{SG/PL} that ball

- the object shift *cum* remnant VP movement analysis of object extraposition in (22) accounts for this word-order pattern
- the subject is spelled out in its base position,⁴ just outside VP and below the landing-site of object shift

(36) $[_{\text{ModP}} [_{\text{VP}} \text{leg } t_{\text{Obj}} \text{ neer} / t_{\text{Obj}} \text{ neerleggen}] [_{\text{Mod}} [_{\text{deontic}:\square}] (\dots) [_{\text{VP}} \text{Obj } [_{\text{VP}} \text{Subj } [t_{\text{VP}}]]]]]$

4 This is consistent with Bennis' (2007) observation that clause-final *jullie* 'you_{PL}' does not ϕ -agree with the finite imperative verb: the finite imperative forms in (32) and (34) do not covary in number with the number feature of the subject, unlike what we see in finite indicative:

- (i) a. jij legt/legde die bal neer
 you_{SG} put.2SG.PRES/PAST that ball down
 b. jullie leggen/legden die bal neer
 you_{PL} put.2PL.PRES/PAST that ball down

9 Object extraposition and variation

- when I wrote Den Dikken (1992) I was unaware that extraposition of the object in the imperative is not possible in all parts of the Dutch-speaking community — in particular, it appears to be largely impossible in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium)
- idiomatic examples of imperatives which, as idioms, only occur with object extraposition ((37); *tel je winst uit!* is literal only) are recognised throughout the Dutch-speaking world

(37) tel uit je winst!
 count out your profit
 ‘what’s the gain/point, what does it all matter?’

- extraposition of the object in imperatives is inversely correlated with Verb Projection Raising (VPR), i.e., the inclusion of non-verbal material in the clause-final verbal cluster
- in northern Dutch, (38a) is grammatical while (38b) is impossible; but the equivalent of (38b) is well-formed throughout the Flemish-speaking area, incl. ‘broadcasting Flemish’

- (38)
- a. dat Jan een huis zou willen kopen
that Jan a house would want.INF buy.INF
‘that Jan would want to buy a house’
 - b. *dat Jan zou willen een huis kopen
that Jan would want.INF a house buy.INF

- object extraposition in Dutch imperatives is the product of leftward movement of the object to the left edge of ν P plus movement of the remnant VP to a position (SpecModP) above the landing-site of object movement

(39) $[_{\text{ModP}} [_{\text{VP}} t_{\text{Obj}} \text{V}] [_{\text{Mod}}_{[\text{deontic}:\square]} (...) [_{\nu\text{P}} \text{OBJECT} [_{\nu\text{P}} \dots t_{\text{VP}}]]]]$

- the grammaticality of (38b) in Flemish suggests that in southern varieties of Dutch the object can stay within VP and can be pied-piped by operations affecting VP

- (38) a. dat Jan een huis zou willen kopen
 that Jan a house would want.INF buy.INF
 ‘that Jan would want to buy a house’
 b. *dat Jan zou willen een huis kopen
 that Jan would want.INF a house buy.INF

- in northern Dutch, the accusative object always leaves the VP upon the projection of vP, raising to the left edge of vP
- in Flemish, the object can also leave the VP; but this happens only after the completion of vP, targeting a topic position somewhere in the periphery of the verb's extended projection — not via 'object shift'
- that extraposition of the object in imperatives is impossible follows if such extraposition takes the object out of the VP *before* the completion of vP — something which, by hypothesis, Flemish cannot do

10 Conclusion

- apart from further enhancing the syntax of Dutch imperatives with object drop and extraposition, this paper brings into focus the roles played in syntax by
 - the silent deontic obligation modal
 - null operators (for dropped objects, temporal semantics, conditionals)
 - object shift *vs* scrambling
 - remnant VP movement⁵

5 A reviewer finds that while ‘sentence-internal derivations of leftward movement are *technically* possible’ (emphasis in the original) for the constructions discussed in this paper, they may not be the only or even the optimal approach: the reviewer suggests the possibility of a ‘simpler syntax’, with the burden of accounting for object drop and extraposition relegated to ‘external discourse context’ — in particular, in the guise of patterns of intonation, ‘which have been independently found to correlate with extra-/inter-sentential conditioning, across a vast array of focus, anaphora and ellipsis constructions’ (here the reviewer singles out Williams 1997, on topic deaccenting in weak cross-over configurations). It is true that object extraposition in infinitives has a characteristic prosodic and pragmatic signature, with the extraposed object both necessarily deaccented and familiar from the discourse. These two properties can be derived from the analysis of object extraposition in imperatives advanced in this paper: they are plausibly tied to object shift to the edge of vP (known to be an anti-focus device), which is an integral part of the derivation. But object shift occurs outside imperatives. It is here that the less ‘simple’ ingredients of the analysis (in particular, remnant VP movement to SpecModP and the postulation of a silent deontic modal) play their major part.

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