

Some Psychological Verbs in Dutch

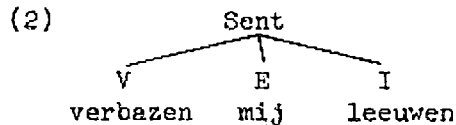
Denis G. Croux
Columbia University

In this brief paper I propose to isolate different types of psychological verbs in Standard Dutch. The verbs chosen will be described in terms of their case frame and the transformations they must undergo. We want to find out how case grammar can explain the uses of these verbs, and whether it can do so within the limits outlined for it during the course. Ultimately I will compare the results with those attained for English and perhaps draw a conclusion about the nature of case grammar.

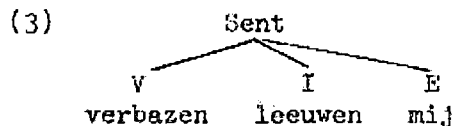
Psych-movement Verbs

Psych-movement verbs are verbs in which an Experiencer is part of the case frame, and in which this Experiencer may not become the surface subject of the sentence. The Psych-movement transformation applies only when no Agent is present. Consider, by way of illustration, sentence (1) and its case-grammar analysis, given as (2).

- (1) Leeuwen verbazen mij.
'Lions astonish me.'



"Mij" names the experiencer of the psychological effect described by the verb. "Leeuwen" names the instrument whereby this effect is elicited in the Experiencer. As things stand now the Experiencer will be selected by the Nominative-marking rule because of the place it occupies in the deep order of cases with the absence of an Agent. We therefore consider the verb as marked to undergo the Psych-movement transformation, so that from (2) we get (3).



The Accusative-marking rule will label the Experiencer as [+Acc], and it will ultimately become the surface direct object of the sentence, while the Instrument will be marked as [+Nom] and will become the surface subject.

Two additional features isolate psychological verbs of the type of "verbazen." First, they can become reflexive verbs with the Experiencer in the surface subject position and the Instrument in an oblique object position. Dutch is slightly different from English in the sense that there is an alternative to Psych-movement. Verbs of the type of "verbazen" also have individual prepositions associated with them. Consider the following examples:

- (4) De mensen verblijden zich over het bezoek.
vs. Het bezoek verblijdt de mensen.
'The visit makes the people happy.'
- (5) De president verwondert zich over de manifestatie.
vs. De manifestatie verwondert de president.
'The president is surprised at the demonstration.'
- (6) De student interesseert zich in taalkunde.
vs. Taalkunde interesseert de student.
'The student is interested in linguistics.'

It can thus be seen that Psych-movement is an optional transformation for verbs of the type "verbazen" and "verwonderen." Alternatively they undergo a copying transformation which Chomsky-adjoins the Experiencer to the basic sentence, followed by a reflexivization rule which produces the reflexive pronoun. The Experiencer becomes the subject of the sentence and the Instrument surfaces as the head noun-phrase in a prepositional phrase.

We note that for all the psychological verbs an animate Agent is not incompatible with an Instrument. When an Agent is present the Psych-movement transformation doesn't apply, as is illustrated by the sentences.

- (7) Jan amuseerde de kinderen met verhalen.
'John amused the children with stories.'
- (8) De president verheugde de studenten met zijn resignatie.
'The students were delighted with the president's resignation.'
- (9) De Keiser verlustigde het volk met brood en spelen.
'The Emperor diverted the people with bread and games.'

When what superficially looks like two instruments appear, one of them can always be described as the property or 'possession' of the other:

- (10) Het licht verheugde mij met zijn glans.
'The light gladdened me with its glimmer.'
- (11) De boom verwonderde mij met zijn fruit.
'The tree amazed me with its fruit.'

However, the requirement suggested in "The case for case", namely that a "trace" should be left behind in the Instrument phrase, does not always apply to Dutch:

- (12) Met geblaf verschrikte de hond de vogel.
'The dog scared the bird with his barking.'

It is true, however, that with "property" nouns the reflexive pronoun is required:

- (13) *De boom verwonderde mij met fruit.
(14) *Het licht verheugde mij met glans.

The verbs "verrassen" (to surprise) and "verschrikken" (to scare (away)) differ from the psychological verbs discussed so far. These verbs can't be reflexive and have a surface oblique object at the same time:¹

- (15) *De dieven verrasten zich voor Jan.
'John surprised the thieves.'
(16) *De vogel verschrikte zich voor de hond.
'The dog scared the bird.'

¹Note that in my dialect of Limburgian Flemish these sentences are grammatical and quite acceptable.

When reflexive they can be called true reflexives in the sense that their Agent and Experiencer happen to be identical in the deep structure of the sentence. Compare this to the Psych-movement verbs of the "verwonderen" type where a reflexive element results from copying the Experiencer element and by adjoining the copy to the sentence. "Verrassen" and "verschrikken" can have an Instrument:

- (17) Met zijn binnenkomst verraste Jan de dieven.
'John's entrance surprised the thieves.'

but they must have an Agent in the surface subject position; the Instrument cannot fill this spot.

- (18) *Met zijn binnenkomst verraste de dieven.

They thus undergo neither Psych-movement, Copying nor Experiencer-shunting.

Experiencer-shunting

Among the verbs that undergo Experiencer-shunting we can distinguish several types. "Schijnen" (to seem) and "lijken"

(to seem) are verbs that may or may not manifest the Experiencer in the surface structure:

- (19) Het schijnt dat Piet ziek is.
'It seems that Peter is sick.'
- (20) Het schijnt mij dat Piet ziek is.
- (21) Het lijkt (mij) dat taalkunde een vreemd vak is.
'It seems (to me) that linguistics is a strange occupation.'

When the Experiencer is present it must be shunted because it can never appear as subject. The above sentences illustrate that an extraposition rule has applied. Instead of this the sentences could undergo Subject-raising only, and in that case the subject NP of the embedded sentence becomes the subject of the higher sentence:

- (22) Piet schijnt ziek te zijn.
- (23) Taalkunde lijkt een vreemd vak te zijn.

"Spijten" (to be sorry), in contrast to the above verbs, has the requirement that the Experiencer be manifested in the surface:

- (24) Het spijt mij dat de oorlog doorgaat.
'I'm sorry that the war is continuing.'
- (25) *Het spijt dat de oorlog doorgaat.

Verbs that are marked to undergo Experiencer-shunting and not to undergo Extraposition are "herinneren (aan)" (to remind) and "lijken (op)" (to resemble).

- (26) Die schrijver herinnert (mij) aan Couperus.
'That author reminds me of Couperus.'
- (27) Magda lijkt op Jan.
'Magda resembles John.'

Note that "lijken" may not have a manifest Experiencer.

Verbs such as "denken" (to think) and "geloven" (to believe), as well as "vrezén" (to fear) and "genieten (van)" (to enjoy) undergo neither Experiencer-shunting nor Extraposition.

To sum up the classification of psychological verbs in Dutch I have drawn up the forcibly incomplete chart given on page

Case grammar is an effective framework for the description of the verbs we have chosen. The verbs seem to function in basically

the same way as do psychological verbs in English, with the exception of their reflexive properties. The basic notions of case grammar help us to distinguish clearly and in a believable way the superficial and the "true" reflexive constructions. This study reveals little that is unexpected, but perhaps the study of more "exotic" languages will be a more difficult test for the case grammar model.

	Psych-move	E cop	E shunt	Extrap	Subj rais
amuseren (met)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verbazen (over)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verwonderen (over)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verblijden (over)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verheugen (over)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verlustigen (in)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verplichten (tot)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
interesseren (bij, in)	α	$-\alpha$	-	\pm	
verrassen	-	-	-	\pm	
verschrikken	-	-	-	\pm	
schijnen	-	-	+	β	$-\beta$
lijken	-	-	+	β	$-\beta$
herinneren (aan)	-	-	+	-	
(ge)lijken (op)	-	-	+	-	
denken	-	-	-	-	
geloven	-	-	-	-	
spijten	-	-	+	-	-
vrezen	-	-	-	-	-
genieten (van)	-	-	-	-	-