

## Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions in Dutch

*Formal, semantic and functional properties*

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### Abstract

This paper discusses one subtype of semi-insubordination in Dutch, viz. adverbial and adjectival semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions (e.g. *Mis-schien/Leuk dat hij komt* 'Maybe/nice that he comes'). These constructions display an unusual syntactic status in that they consist of a (formally) subordinate *dat*-clause which is preceded by just one adverb or adjective, instead of a full matrix clause. In this study, I will outline the semantic, structural and functional properties of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions by reviewing previous accounts of this phenomenon against empirical corpus data. The data show that there are basically two types of initial elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions: evaluative and discursive ones. Both subtypes challenge traditional syntactic analyses in that they extend beyond the sentence level: they represent syntactically independent units, but pragmatically they are highly dependent on prior discourse. It will therefore be argued that it is essential to include aspects of discourse organization in the analysis of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

**Keywords:** corpus investigation, discourse, Dutch, semi-insubordination, syntax

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The concept of semi-insubordination presupposes both subordination and insubordination. Subordination involves a grammatical dependency whereby a dependent clause is embedded under a matrix clause. Insubordination is an umbrella term for ‘the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses’ (Evans 2007: 367). In the context of this paper, so-called ‘autonomous *dat*-clauses’, as in (1), fall under the rubric of insubordination.

- (1) *Dat hij dat nog mocht meemaken!*  
 ‘I never thought he would live to experience this!’  
 (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 227)

The term *semi-insubordination* was coined by Van linden & Van de Velde (2014: 227) to denote subordinate *dat*-clauses for which ‘the main clause has shrunk to a single word’ and which ‘can be found to function (semi-) autonomously’ (ibid: 226). Semi-insubordinate constructions comprise, inter alia, formally subordinate *dat*-clauses preceded by a single (modified) element, as in (2).<sup>2</sup>

- (2) *(Wat) fijn dat hij dat nog mocht meemaken!*  
 ‘(How) lovely (that) he would live to experience this!’  
 (adapted after Van linden & Van de Velde’s example in (1) above)

Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are characterized by remarkable syntactic and semantic properties. First, the sentence part following the initial constituent (*wat*) *fijn* ‘(how) lovely’ in (2) is formally a subordinate *dat*-clause (cf. the conjunction *dat* ‘that’ and the finite verbal cluster *mocht meemaken* in final position). Yet, the subordinate *dat*-clause is not embedded under a matrix clause, but introduced by a single (modified) element only.

Second, the initial constituent in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions typically expresses evaluative meanings (i.e. modal and attitudinal

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2 Subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction *als* ‘if’ may also be preceded by just one element (e.g. *Gezellig als je komt!* ‘Nice if you drop by!’).

meanings like *misschien* ‘maybe/perhaps’, *jammer* ‘unfortunate(ly)’ or *leuk* ‘nice’; Bos 1963, Ramat & Ricca 1998, Aelbrecht 2006, Van linden & Van de Velde 2014). Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions do not seem to be compatible with non-evaluative initial forms such as temporal adverbs (e.g. *vandaag* ‘today’) or spatial adverbs (e.g. *hier* ‘here’).

The terminology and working definition of semi-insubordination are adopted from Van linden & Van de Velde (2014: 231), as cited in (3).

- (3) [C]onstructions [which] consist of a subordinate *dat*-clause that is preceded by just a [sic.] one element which seems to function at matrix clause level. Crucially, this element conveys the attitudinal (including epistemic) assessment of the propositional content expressed in the *dat*-clause.

Thus, in accordance with (3), semi-insubordination involves ‘constructions in which a single matrix constituent is followed by a *dat*-clause which functions as its propositional complement’ (ibid: 227). Moreover, the ‘single matrix constituent’ (or ‘minimal matrix’/‘one-word matrix clause’, cf. Julien 2009) typically expresses ‘interpersonal meanings’ (i.e. deontic, directive, epistemic, evaluative and discursive meanings) which ‘go almost invariably together with exclamative illocutionary force’ (ibid: 228).<sup>3</sup>

This study deals with one subtype of semi-insubordination, viz. adjectival and adverbial semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.<sup>4</sup> More specifically, it focusses on formally subordinate *dat*-clauses which are preceded by just one adverb, as in (4a), or one adjective, as in (4b). Some initial elements may be ambiguous between adverbial and adjectival status (e.g. *waarschijnlijk* ‘probably/probable’ in 4b), due to the fact that there is no morphological distinction between adverbs and adjectives in Dutch. Because of this, both adjectival and adverbial initial elements will be taken into account in the present investigation.

3 In their study, ‘exclamatives’ exhibit the following four features: i) exclamative intonation, ii) a high degree of emotional involvement on the part of the speaker, iii) often introduced by a modal particle or interjection, and iv) hearer uptake is not necessarily expected (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014: 228). However, initial uncertainty adverbs (e.g. *misschien* ‘maybe’) in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are typically accompanied by ‘assertion intonation’ (ibid: 232; Bos 1963: 178).

4 Other types of initial elements are also possible in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions (e.g. nouns, interjections or verbal forms; Bos 1963; Van linden & Van de Velde 2014). For reasons of feasibility, this study is limited to adverbial and adjectival forms only.

- (4) a. *Misschien dat hij komt.* (Bos 1963: 174)  
 Maybe that he comes.  
 ‘Maybe (that) he comes.’
- b. *Waarschijnlijk da Kris komt.*  
 Probably that Kris comes  
 ‘It is {probably the case/probable} that Kris comes.’ (Aelbrecht 2006: 4)

Adverbial semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions (in 4a) are particularly interesting because initial sentence adverbs ‘go against their very nature [as] they occur together with a complementizer and play a main predication role’ (Ramat & Ricca 1998: 212). As such, constructions like (4a) cannot be accounted for by partial ellipsis of the matrix clause, as is possible for adjectival semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions (e.g. *Het is goed dat Kris komt* ‘It is good that Kris comes’, Aelbrecht 2006: 1).

This study provides a detailed description of the formal, semantic and discursive properties of adverbial and adjectival semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions on the basis of a corpus survey. This involves a systematic bottom-up analysis of initial adverbs and adjectives preceding a *dat*-clause in the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*. The aim of this paper is twofold: i) to give an overview of, and account for, the range of possible adjectives and adverbs in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions, and ii) to verify observations and theoretical claims about these constructions as described in the literature by means of empirical data.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the preliminaries to this study by summarizing the main insights from the available literature on semi-insubordination in Dutch. The method and sources used in this study are described in Section 3. In Section 4, different adverbial and adjectival patterns of semi-insubordination are discussed and exemplified with corpus data. A discussion of the implications of the findings from the corpus investigation in relation to recurrent issues in the literature is presented in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 contains a concluding summary of the prototypical semantic, formal and discursive properties of adverbial and adjectival semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions in Dutch.

## 2 Background

Contrary to the related notion of insubordination (cf. Evans & Watanabe 2016 and references therein), semi-insubordination remains an under stu-

died phenomenon. Yet, its most remarkable formal and semantic characteristics have been noted by some linguists (cf. Bos 1963, Ramat & Ricca 1998, Aelbrecht 2006, Van linden & Van de Velde 2014, D'Hertefelt 2015). The main focus in these, predominantly structural-oriented, studies is centered on the description of possible initial constituents in semi-insubordinate constructions, as well as exploring possible scenarios for the rise of these constructions. The functional and discursive aspects of semi-insubordination phenomena have not received much attention in the literature thus far.

However, because of their presumed relatedness, the functional and discursive features described for insubordination in general (cf. Evans 2007: 386-423), and complement insubordination in particular, are also likely to apply to semi-insubordinate constructions. Verstraete et al. (2012) compiled a typology of complement insubordination in Dutch which comprises three semantic domains. These are: (5a) deontic insubordination (e.g. wishes, prohibition, advice), (5b) evaluative insubordination (e.g. surprise, disgust, various positive and negative stances), and (5c) discursive insubordination (e.g. expansion, clarification of preceding discourse).

- (5) a. *Dat ze maar gauw volledig genezen is.*  
 CONJ she PART quickly fully heal.PTCP be.PRS  
 'I hope she recovers fully soon.' (p. 128)
- b. *Dat je dat nu pas weet.*  
 CONJ you DEM now PART know.PRS  
 'I can't understand you've only just found out.' (p. 140)
- c. A: *Hebben jullie wel een pad hierachter?*  
 B: *Ja.*  
 A: *Dat je zo met de fiets achter langs kan.*  
 CONJ you DEM with ART bike behind PART can.PRS  
 A: 'Do you have a path behind (the garden)  
 B: Yes.  
 A: Where you can reach the garden from the back with your bike.'  
 (p. 142)
- (6) a. *Verdorie dat je dat nu gedaan hebt!* (Bos 1963: 193)  
 'Damn that you did this!'
- b. *Mogelijk, dat hij het verkeerd begrepen heeft.* (Bos 1963: 177)  
 'Possibly, that he got it all wrong.'

As regards the formal properties of semi-insubordination, there are four comparable views on the structural status of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions: i) a complex clause without a subject-predicate construction (Bos 1963), ii) a complex clause with partial matrix clause ellipsis (Aelbrecht 2006), iii) a subordinate *dat*-clause preceded by a single matrix constituent (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014) and iv) an independent complement clause preceded by a main clause trace (D’Hertefelt 2015). These are all sentence-based analyses in which semi-insubordinate constructions are considered to be defective complex clauses (either with assertive or expressive intonation).

In the remainder of this paper, the full range of initial adjectives and adverbs, as well as the plausibility of previous structural analyses, will be verified and complemented on the basis of empirical corpus data.

### 3 Corpus survey: method and sources

Adjectival and adverbial semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions will be investigated on the basis of spoken language data from the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (9 million words; Nederlandse Taalunie). This corpus contains both Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch speech data from different genres (e.g. face-to-face conversations, phone dialogues, various types of commentaries, debates, interviews, etc.).<sup>5</sup> In this study, all read-aloud texts (= spoken written texts) are excluded from the corpus investigation.

The *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* is a lemmatized corpus, which was searched for by means of the queries ‘ADV + *dat*’ and ‘ADJ + *dat*’. These queries include variants with one or a few unspecified lemma’s in between the ADV/ADJ and *dat* in order to capture modified initial constituents (e.g. *heel leuk* ‘very nice’) as well. The search interface generated a file of collocations which then had to be checked manually in order to see if the combinations ADV/ADJ + *dat* indeed represented instances of semi-insubordination.

The outcome of these queries yielded a large amount of hits, out of which numerous irrelevant collocations had to be removed. More focused follow-up searches on specific combinations of ADV/ADJ + *dat* offered an overview of the range of possible initial adverbs and adjectives in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions. See Tables 1-3 for an overview of the full

5 [http://lands.let.ru.nl/cgn/doc\\_Dutch/topics/version\\_1.0/overview.htm#kerncorpora](http://lands.let.ru.nl/cgn/doc_Dutch/topics/version_1.0/overview.htm#kerncorpora)

range of attested initial adverbs and adjectives in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions in the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*.

#### 4 Results of the corpus survey

The corpus data indicate that semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions as such are an infrequent phenomenon, though there is considerable variation in synonymous forms for attested initial elements within their respective semantic domains. As pointed out by the previous studies mentioned in Section 2, patterns of semi-insubordination are predominantly found with evaluative elements in initial position. In addition, the corpus survey revealed one more pattern which has not been reported in previous studies: discursive semi-insubordination.<sup>6</sup> This subtype subsumes *dat*-clauses which are introduced by a multitude of non-attitudinal rhetorical items (e.g. *vandaar* 'therefore/that's why', *plus* 'plus' or *dus* 'so') which convey the speaker's reasoning towards the *dat*-clause in relation to prior discourse.

As could be deduced on the basis of the available literature, deictic adverbs (e.g. *hier* 'here', *nu* 'now'), adverbs of time and place<sup>7</sup> (e.g. *vandaag* 'today', *nergens* 'nowhere'), non-evaluative adjectives (i.e. purely descriptive elements such as quality adjectives (e.g. *vierkant* 'squared', *groen* 'green'), adjectives related to proper names (e.g. *Japans* 'Japanese') or adjectives of substance (e.g. *zilveren* 'silvery', *houten* 'wooden') were not found in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions. The non-occurrence of these items is not surprising in light of the observation that initial elements constitute a 'minimal matrix' which is equivalent to a subject-predicate construction (cf. Bos 1963). Deictic and referential elements simply cannot be paraphrased into a speaker-oriented qualification (i.e. 'I deem it X that Y') towards the *dat*-clause.

Discursive initial elements appear to be more frequent than either modal or attitudinal initial elements (62.4% versus 23.4% and 14.2% respectively). Most frequent are discursive constructions introduced by *vandaar* (26.5%), *niet* (21.2%), *dus* (13.5%), *zodanig* (7.9%) and *namelijk*

6 Recall that this subtype has been noticed for insubordination constructions (cf. Verstraete et al. (2012) 'discursive insubordination'; D'Hertefelt & Verstraete (2014) 'elaborative independent complement clauses').

7 There is a look-a-like pattern typical of Belgian Dutch in which interrogative adverbs or temporal adverbs are followed by a *dat*-clause (e.g. *Hoe dat ik in Brussel geraakt ben*. 'How that I got to Brussels'; *Toen dat 'k hem dat zei*. 'Then that I told him that'). In Netherlandic Dutch, *dat* would be left out in these examples.

(4.8%). Evaluative initial elements turn out to be less frequent than one might be inclined to think on the basis of the literature. Modal elements (with the exception of *misschien* which takes up as much as 93% of all modal instances) hardly occur in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions. For initial attitudinal elements there is more variation: *goed* (22.9%), *jammer* (14.5%), *leuk* (10.6%), *gelukkig* (7.5%) and *fijn* (6.6%) are the most frequent items within the evaluative category. There are only a few attestations of both near-synonymous (e.g. *spijtig* 'regrettable', *heerlijk* 'lovely', *prettig* 'pleasant') and other speaker-oriented (e.g. *logisch* 'logical', *toevallig* 'coincidental(ly)', *onvoorstelbaar* 'inconceivable') initial elements.

It is possible for evaluative (i.e. modal + attitudinal) and discursive (i.e. rhetorical) initial elements to modify one another. As such, they regularly combine into an initial constituent consisting of a larger strings of elements in front of the *dat*-clause (e.g. *misschien daarom* 'maybe therefore', *jammer alleen* 'just a pity', *vreemd toch* 'strange though'; or the other way around). Both evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions turn out to be syntactically independent units, which are pragmatically highly reliant on foregoing context. As such, they reflect different degrees of pragmatic dependence: they may expand on a specific (identifiable) part of the prior context, or a whole stretch of preceding discourse (i.e. the overall message of what has been said).

#### 4.1 Evaluative semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions

Evaluative semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions may be preceded by two semantic types of initial elements: modal and attitudinal adjectives and adverbs. Attitudinal semi-insubordination involves *dat*-clauses preceded by an attitudinal adjective or adverb (cf. Bos 1963 'emotion particles'; Van linden & Van de Velde 2014 'evaluative' and 'affective' semi-insubordination). Modal semi-insubordination subsumes *dat*-clauses introduced by a modal adverb or adjective (cf. Bos 1963 'assertion particles'; Van linden & Van de Velde 2014 'epistemic semi-insubordination').

Both attitudinal and modal initial elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions express speaker-oriented evaluations towards the propositional content of the *dat*-clause. In addition to expressing an evaluative value, they also point back to (a stretch of) preceding discourse. That is, evaluative semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions represent additional comments, evaluations, elaborations, conclusions, responses and reactions to prior context. The two main types of evaluative semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions will be discussed and exemplified with corpus data in subsections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.



#### 4.1.1 Attitudinal initial elements in evaluative semi-insubordinate dat-constructions

Attitudinal semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are typically introduced by a wide variety of speaker-oriented adjectives. These include adjectives expressing positive stance (e.g. *leuk* 'nice', *goed* 'good', *fijn* 'lovely'), negative stance (e.g. *stom* 'stupid', *vreselijk* 'terrible', *vervelend* 'nasty') as well as various other kinds of personal evaluations (e.g. *logisch* 'logical', *merkwaardig* 'peculiar', *jammer* 'too bad/a pity'). Table 1 shows an overview of the attested initial attitudinal elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

**Table 1** Initial attitudinal elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

ELEMENT	COUNT	ELEMENT	COUNT	ELEMENT	COUNT
aardig	1	heerlijk	2	prettig	1
begrijpelijk	2	hopelijk	3	raar	4
belachelijk	1	jammer	34	relaxed	2
best	7	knap	3	schattig	1
content	1	leuk	24	sensationeel	1
erg	1	lief	1	slim	1
fijn	15	logisch	2	spijtig	5
flauw	2	merkwaardig	1	stom	2
fraai	1	moedig	1	terecht	1
gaaf	2	mooi	1	toevallig	5
gek	4	ongelooflijk	1	typisch	1
gelukkig	17	onvoorstelbaar	2	vies	1
gemeen	1	opmerkelijk	3	vreemd	2
gezellig	3	pijnlijk	1	vreselijk	1
goed	52	plezant	1		
grappig	5	plezierig	1		

In example (7), speaker V6o815 gives a description of his/her current impractical situation at home. Speaker V6o814 evaluates the situation optimistically by means of *gelukkig dat*-clause in which s/he states that it is fortunate speaker V6o815 got a candle now that s/he is without electricity at home.

- (7) V6o815 *goh en den elekriek [sic] is hier uitgevallen.*  
           *gee and the electrics is here malfunctioning.*  
 V6o814 *maar en alles in orde nu al?*  
           *but. and everything ok now already?*

- V6o815 *ja. nee uh 'k heb uh poeh 't is maar*  
 yes. no uh I have uh pooh it is just  
*een stuk.*  
 a piece.
- V6o814 *nee kaarsjes*  
 no candles  
*m gelukkig dat je een kaarsje gekregen*  
 m fortunate(ly) that you a candle got  
*hebt hé.*  
 have hey
- V6o815 *ja nee nee maar 't is maar uh de helft*  
 yes no no but it is just uh the half  
*van het huis die weg is van den elektriciteit*  
 of the house that gone is of the electricity  
*dus uh.*  
 do uh.

'A: gee and the electricity is not working in here. B: but, is everything ok now? A: yes no uh I've got uh well it is just one part. B: no candles m it is a good thing you got a candle, isn't it. A: yes no no well it is just half of the house which is without electricity so uh.'

The speaker Paul (No8235), in example (8), adds a positive comment to the fact that he is pleasantly surprised by the phone call of No8234. The initial element *leuk* is modified by *wat* 'how' which emphasizes its positive value even more.

- (8) No8235 *met Paul.*  
 with Paul
- No8234 *ja hoi.*  
 yes hi
- No8235 *ja*  
 yes
- No8234 *daar ben ik weer ggg*  
 there am I again ggg
- No8235 *hé ben jij dat?*  
 ah is you that?
- No8235 *hé wat leuk dat je belt.*  
 hey! how nice that you call.

'P: Paul speaking.' X: yes hi. P: yes. X: here I am again. P: Hey is that you? How nice you call me!'

In example (9), speaker N05027 describes the positive sides of the cinema Ede Cinemac. Later on in the conversation with N05030, s/he refers back to these positive statements by adding and highlighting one particular aspect of the cinema which is rather unfortunate according to the speaker: the cinema is located in Ede, instead of Wageningen.

- (9) N05027 [Ede Cinemac] *is echt heel groot en uh*  
 [Ede Cinemac] is really very big and uh  
*ja een beetje Luxachtig en je kan er*  
 yes a little Lux-like and you can there  
*ijs kopen van de ijssalon in*  
 icecream buy from the ice cream shop in  
*Wageningen en dat is superlekker ijs.*  
 Wageningen and that is delicious icecream.  
 [...]
- N05027 *alleen jammer dat 't in Ede is en niet*  
 just a pity that it in Ede is and niet  
*in Wageningen*  
 in Wageningen
- N05030 *ja.*  
 yes.  
 'A: [Ede Cinemac] is really very big, and a little bit like Lux [art-house cinema in Nijmegen KB] and they sell ice cream from the ice cream shop in Wageningen, which is very delicious ice cream. [...]. Just a pity it is located in Ede and not in [the neighboring] town of Wageningen. B: indeed.'

The data also contain instances of so-called 'affirmative semi-insubordination' (Van linden & Van de Velde 2014), i.e. *dat*-clauses introduced by an initial element denoting the speaker's mental state (i.e. 'I am X that...' instead of 'I deem it X that ... / 'It is X that ...'). In example (10), speaker N08274 elaborates further on the previous speaker's question whether s/he had a good working day by saying that s/he is glad the weekend has started.

- (10) No8273 *lekker gewerkt?*  
 nicely worked?  
 No8274 *bah.*  
 ugh!  
 No8273 *bleh.*  
 bleh  
 No8274 *blij dat 't weekend is.*  
 glad that it weekend is.  
 'A: Good day at work? B: ugh. A: bleh. B Glad it's weekend.'

Since patterns like (10) differ both semantically and structurally from the evaluative and discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions under discussion, they will not be further discussed in this paper.

Contrary to the abundance of speaker-oriented adjectives, attitudinal sentence adverbs hardly occur as initial constituent in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions (with the exception of *gelukkig* 'luckily', *hopelijk* 'hopefully'). On semantic grounds one would expect all speaker-oriented sentence adverbs to appear in initial position (Bos 1963, Aelbrecht 2006), but obvious candidates (e.g. *helaas* 'unfortunately' or *uiteraard* 'indeed') are entirely absent in the corpus data (cf. the overviews of attested initial elements in Table 1-3).

This finding seems to support the idea that initial elements indeed represent 'minimal matrices' which can be construed as full clause structures (i.e. I find it X that... / It is X that...). In this sense, elements belonging to the ambiguous category of 'adjective-adverbs' (cf. Aelbrecht 2006) are likely to have adjectival, rather than adverbial status, because sentence adverbs lack predication properties. The sporadic occurrence of initial attitudinal sentence adverbs may be explained by an 'extension of the predicative construction 'it is + ADJ + that ...' to adverbial constructions, probably via those adverbs which are formally identical to adjectival forms [...]: 'it is + ADJ/ADV + that...' → 'ADV that...' (Ramat & Ricca 1998: 213). Once this path has been established, adverbs without adjectival counterpart may be directly recruited by means of analogical extension on the basis of semantic similarities with predicative adjectives.

Both the 'adjectival' and 'adverbial' initial constituents may be used as one-word responses or replies to previous statements (cf. Bos' 1963 'condi-

tional sentence valence').<sup>8</sup> Note that the initial 'sentence adverb' *gelukkig* is near-synonymous to the 'adjectival expression' (*wat goed/fijn* '(how) good/lovely.' Yet, when modified by *wat* 'how', initial adjectives cannot be rephrased as a full clause structure (i.e. *\*ik vind het wat leuk dat X* | *\*het is wat leuk dat X*). Because of this, I will analyze the attested attitudinal elements in terms of discourse units rather than rigid word classes at the level of sentence grammar. This functional classification of initial elements eliminates both potential classification problems (e.g. *jammer* is an adjective 'unfortunate' according to Aelbrecht (2006), but regarded an adverb 'unfortunately' by Van linden & Van de Velde 2014), and the special status for a subclass of sentence adverbs to occur in front of a subordinate clause (cf. Ramat & Ricca 1998).

#### 4.1.2 Modal initial elements in evaluative semi-insubordinate dat-constructions

For modal semi-insubordination in general, and adverbial semi-insubordination in particular, it can be observed that the epistemic adverb *misschien* 'maybe' is the most prominent initial element. For other near-synonymous modal elements such as *waarschijnlijk* 'probable/probably', *mogelijk* 'possible/possibly', *wellicht* 'perhaps', there are surprisingly few, or no hits at all (e.g. *onwaarschijnlijk* 'improbable, unlikely', *sowieso* 'in any case', *vermoedelijk* 'presumably'), as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Initial modal elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

ELEMENT	COUNT	ELEMENT	COUNT
misschien	348	waarschijnlijk	6
mogelijk	4	wellicht	8
natuurlijk	6	zeker	2

The vast majority of initial modal elements as mentioned in Bos (1963) and Aelbrecht (2006) is not attested in the corpus data (e.g. *allicht* 'probably', *blijkbaar* 'apparently', *uiteraard* 'indeed', *alleszins* 'absolutely', *ongetwijfeld* 'undoubtedly', *klaarblijkelijk* 'obviously', *vanzelfsprekend* 'of course').

Example (11) contains two sequentially arranged *misschien dat*-clauses. The first *misschien dat*-clause indicates a possible explanation for the

8 Bos does not explicitly define the concept of conditional sentence valence (= 'voorwaardelijke zinsvalentie'). The 'conditional' aspect seems to refer to the contextual dependence or responsive relation to prior utterances when elements such as *misschien* 'maybe/perhaps', *natuurlijk* or *vanzelfsprekend* 'of course/obviously/self-evident' are used as an answer or reply.

speaker's tiredness (= problems with the blood pressure). By means of the second *misschien dat*-clause the speaker follows up on the suggested explanation by adding a prediction about his/her physical state.<sup>9</sup>

- (11) V90603 *Hebt de gij nog plannen?*  
 Have you still plans?  
 [...]
- V90575 *alleen ik heb nog altijd zo dat gevoel van heel*  
 well I have still always so this feeling of very  
*moe te zijn.*  
 tired to be.  
*misschien dat mijne bloeddruk ook niet niet*  
 maybe that my blood pressure also not not  
*in orde is.*  
 in alright is.  
*uh misschien dat 'k mij morgen wat*  
 eh maybe that I me tomorrow somewhat  
*beter voel.*  
 better feel.  
*morgen 'ns uitslapen en uh...*  
 tomorrow once sleep long and eh...  
 'A: Have you got any plans? B: Well, I still have this feeling of being very tired. Perhaps my blood pressure is not all right. Uh maybe I will feel better tomorrow. Tomorrow I will sleep long and uh...'

In addition to expressing an epistemic assessment, the *misschien dat*-clauses link back to prior discourse: they represent follow-up comments to the speaker's initial statement that s/he is still feeling very tired.

The ambiguous modal element *waarschijnlijk* 'probable/probably' in example (12) introduces an epistemically modified conclusion to the explanatory assertion that the speaker at once knew how to play a fretful instructor on the basis of his/her experiences from the past.

- (12) N01096 *plotseling wist ik hoe 'k hoe 'k hoe 'k*  
 suddenly knew I how I how I how I  
*zeikerige instructeur moest spelen. ggg. heb ik*  
 fretful instructor must play. ggg. have I

9 Cf. Van linden & Beijering (2016) for a functional taxonomy of *misschien dat*-clauses in Dutch.

*toch te vaak mee te maken gehad*  
 anyway too often with to make had  
*waarschijnlijk dat ik 't zo na kon doen.*  
 probable/probably that I it so after could do.  
 'A: At once I realized how to play a fretful instructor. After all I  
 have had to do with them far too often. It's highly likely that I  
 could easily imitate it.'

Bos (1963) suggests that the predominance of *misschien dat*-clauses can be explained in terms of the 'conditional sentence valence' of *misschien*. Though it may well be the case that *misschien* is more likely to be used as a one-word reply/response than near-synonymous expressions like *vermoedelijk* or *denkelijk*, virtually all attested initial evaluative elements cited in Section 4.1 share this functional property.

Alternatively, the prevalence of *misschien* in semi-insubordinate constructions can be explained by its historical development.<sup>10</sup> The epistemic sentence adverb *misschien* originated via univerbation a higher predicate (i.e. *(het) mach schien* [= *geschieden* KB] '(it) may happen' > *misschien* 'maybe'; Philippa et al. 2003-2009).<sup>11</sup> On this assumption, present-day *misschien dat*-constructions have retained the predication properties of the original verb phrase *(it) may happen/be (that)*. Thus, the subset of univerbated sentence adverbs can also be considered 'minimal matrices' because of their origin in a predicate.

#### 4.2 Discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions

Discursive semi-insubordination involves *dat*-clauses introduced by elements, whose primary meaning is not attitudinal or modal, but rhetorical in nature. These initial elements convey the speaker's reasoning towards the content of the *dat*-clause in relation to the prior context (cf. 'discursive/elaborative insubordination', Verstraete et al. (2012); D'Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014).

10 Cf. Beijering (2016); Beijering & Norde (submitted) for a similar account of Norwegian *kanskje* at and Swedish *kanske att* constructions: *(det) kan sk(j)e at(t) X > Kansk(j)e (at(t)) X*: (it) can/may happen that X > Maybe (that) X.

11 This development is a cross-linguistically attested tendency (cf. Ramat & Ricca 1998: 212-14); see also <http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/misschien>

**Table 3 Initial discursive elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.**

ELEMENT	COUNT	ELEMENT	COUNT	ELEMENT	COUNT
alleen	17	d'rtegen	1	omwille	1
anderzijds	3	dus	135	ondertussen	2
behalve	2	echt	8	ook	20
bijgevolg	1	eigenlijk	2	plus	29
bijvoorbeeld	18	enerzijds	1	vaak	1
bovendien	2	evenwel	1	vandaar	265
daardoor	2	gewoon	40	waardoor	4
daarmee	17	kortom	1	zo	4
daarna	1	namelijk	48	zodanig	79
daarom	29	<i>niet</i>	212	zodoende	3
dan	12	nou	37		

A prominent discursive semi-insubordination pattern is introduced by *vandaar* ‘therefore/that’s why’. In example (13), speaker N05042 infers on the basis of the information provided by speaker N05038 why s/he asked whether N05042 had a good night sleep. The discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-construction introduced by *vandaar* expresses the final conclusion in speaker N05042’s reasoning about why N05038 asked if N05042 was wide awake.

- (13) N05042 *ik heb net een uh e een weekendje*  
 I have just a uh a weekend  
*v een week midweek Duitsland achter de rug.*  
 a week midweek Germany behind the back.
- N05038 *ja nou dat heb ik al gehoord*  
 yes well that have I already heard  
*van Katja.*  
 from Katja.
- N05042 *had je 't al gehoord? [...]*  
 had you it already heard?  
**oh vandaar dat** je vroeg of ik wel  
 oh therefore that you asked if I wide  
 uitgeslapen was?  
 awake was?
- N05038 *ja precies.*  
 yes exactly.  
 ‘A: I just returned from a midweek in Germany. B: Yeah Katja  
 already told me that. A: Did you already hear about it? Oh that’s  
 why you asked if I was wide awake? B: yes exactly.’



The *plus dat*-construction in (14) adds an additional comment, more specifically a final supplement, to the speaker's prior statement that thrillers are easy to read, and difficult to put away [compared to specialist literature KB]. These constructions can be paraphrased as 'and as a completion of this stretch of argumentation I hereby say that (proposition)' (cf. Nørgård-Sørensen 2001: 74).<sup>12</sup>

- (14) V40147 *maar af en toe lees ik zo wel 'ns iets*  
 but now and then read I so PART ever something  
*tussendoor en als dat een thriller is dan*  
 in between and if that a thriller is then  
*kan ik dat moeilijk wegleggen dus dan dan*  
 can I that difficult put away so then then  
*dat gaat wel gemakkelijker.*  
 that goes well easier.

V40100 *ja ja ja ja ja uhu.*  
 yes yes yes yes yes uhu.

V40147 *plus dat dat ook niet zoveel nadenken*  
 plus that that also not so much reflection  
*vraagt natuurlijk hè.*  
 demands of course right.

'A: but occasionally I read other stuff in between, and if that is a thriller, I find it difficult to put away, so in that case the reading proceeds easier. B: yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, uhu. A: Plus that it does not demand a lot of thinking of course, don't you think?'

The *namelijk dat*-clause in (15) serves to expand on the prior context by giving a further clarification of (one specific part of) the previous statement: it explicitly states what was going on.

- (15) N05082 *dus René heeft 'm maar verteld wat er aan de*  
 so René has him PART told what there on the  
*hand was. namelijk dat z'n auto in puin lag.*  
 hand was. namely that his car in ruins lied.

12 Note that *plus dat*-clauses are different from seemingly similar *en dat*-clauses. Unlike *en dat*-clauses, *plus dat*-clauses do not have an identifiable matrix clause in prior discourse. This difference is due to the fact that *en* is used to connect two clauses at the sentence level, whereas *plus* operates at the discourse level by adding a supplementary comment to a prior statement.

- No5083 *ja ja.*  
 yes yes.
- No5082 *nou daar werd ie ook niet heel vrolijk*  
 well there became he also not very cheerful  
*van natuurlijk.*  
 about of course.

'A: So it was René who told him what was going on. Namely, that his car lied in ruins. B: yes, yes. A: well, that did not really amuse him of course.'

Another salient pattern is represented by *niet dat*-clauses. Unlike Bos (1963: 194), I do not consider the negation adverb *niet* 'not' to be an 'assertion particle' because it does not 'express the speaker's doubt concerning the things referred to by the dependent clause.' In this pattern, *niet* 'not' expresses 'a rejection of conclusions derived from contextual assumptions' (Delahunty 2006: 213), rather than a negation of the content of the *dat*-clause. For this negated concessive construction of the type 'although X, not Y', there are different structural patterns (e.g. with unfinished intonation, with and without a supplementary *maar*-clause; cf. also Bos 1963).<sup>13</sup>

In example (16), speaker No5178 argues why s/he does not want to live in Nijmegen by stressing what s/he does not like about this city. S/he contrasts *de Mythe* with a comparable (and according to the speaker: also a nicer) night club in the neighboring town of Arnhem. In order to avoid the unwanted assumption that No5178 thinks Arnhem is the place to be, s/he uses a *niet-dat*-construction to point out that Arnhem is actually not that great either, but nonetheless nicer than Nijmegen.

- (16) No5178 *zo'n suffe stad echt 't enige wat er leuk is*  
 such a dull city truly the only that there fun is  
*aan Nijmegen is de Lux en voor de*  
 about Nijmegen is the Lux and for the  
*rest... nee 't heeft weinig te bieden*  
 rest... no it has little to offer

13 Concessive clauses generally take the form 'although p, q' (Crevels 2001: 1), or 'q, although p', whereby although p is a concessive clause, and q a conclusion that does not straightforwardly follow from p. In addition to these concessive-like patterns, *niet-dat* clauses often occur as the fixed (responsive) expression *niet dat ik weet* 'not that I know', as in: No5141: *heb jij nog niet een tip voo tip voor Genève om wat daar te doen is of niet?* No5146: *nee ja nee. niet dat ik weet. nee.* No5141: Don't you have any tips about what to do in Genève? No5146: No yes no. Not that I know. No.'

No5176 *de Mythe*  
*de Mythe*

No5178 *nee vind ik niet leuk. in vergelijking met de*  
no find I not nice in comparison with the  
*Entre Nous in Arnhem vind 'k dat niks. ja*  
*Entre Nous in Arnhem find I that none yes*  
*niet dat Arnhem nou zaligmakend is maar...*  
not that Arnhem PART beatific is but...

No5176 *ja ik vind Arnhem ook niet zo leuk met*  
yes I find Arnhem too not so fun with  
*stappen hoor op de Korenmarkt.*  
going out PART on the Korenmarkt.

'A: Such a dull city, really the only fun thing about Nijmegen is the Lux, but for the rest...no it doesn't have much to offer. B: *de Mythe*. A: No I don't like it. Compared to the *Entre Nous* in Arnhem I think it sucks. Well not that Arnhem is such a great city, but... B: Indeed, I agree that Arnhem is not so fun either for a night out at the Korenmarkt.

Van linden & Van de Velde (2014: 233) exclude *niet-dat* patterns from their study of (semi-) autonomous subordination patterns because of the 'distinct semantic-pragmatic value' described by Delahunty (2006). The corpus examples in Section 4 also illustrate that *niet dat*-clauses are semantically, structurally (unfinished or with apodosis) and functionally very different from the evaluative and discursive constructions exemplified in the present study. Therefore, *niet dat*-patterns are best considered a distinct construction type, which fit the structural template of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

As demonstrated by the examples in (13-16), the initial element in discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions specifies a rhetorical relation between prior discourse and the *dat*-clause from the speaker's point of view (e.g. reason, clarification, conclusion, etc.). Like evaluative semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions, these discursive patterns function as additional comments, evaluations, further elaborations, conclusions, responses and reactions to prior utterances.

Discursive semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions display different degrees of dependence on prior context. Some initial discursive elements (e.g. *vandaar* 'therefore', *daarom* 'for that reason', *precies* 'exactly'), resemble evaluative elements in that these too have conditional sentence valence. Other elements (e.g. *plus* 'plus/in addition', *namelijk* 'namely') repre-

sent instances of ‘discourse-connective’ *dat*-constructions.<sup>14</sup> These initial elements cannot be used as one-word responses, they necessarily need a complement clause in order to form a meaningful utterance. For some, but not all, instances of these constructions it is possible to detect an identifiable matrix in the prior context. These different levels of structural and pragmatic dependence nicely illustrate the gradient zone between subordinate and (semi-) in subordinate constructions (cf. Sansiñena et al. 2015).

## 5 Additional observations and alternative lines of analysis

The corpus examples in Section 4 differ in several respects from the working definition of semi-in subordination in (3). First, semi-in subordinate *dat*-constructions always seem to have discourse internal status. Although they are syntactically independent sentences, they are pragmatically bound to prior context/turns. That is, it is not possible to start a conversation with any of the semi-in subordinate corpus examples in Section 4. This finding questions the ‘semi-autonomous’ status, both in a narrow (i.e. construction internal), and broad sense (i.e. the construction as a whole), of semi-in subordinate *dat*-constructions.

Moreover, on the basis of the label ‘semi-in subordination’ one would expect the ‘subordinate clause’ to be an in subordinate one. That is, it should be possible to use the dependent clause autonomously (cf. example 1 in Section 1). However, this does not seem to be the case for the corpus examples in Section 4, regardless of expressive or assertive intonation. Neither the ‘single matrix element’ nor the *dat*-clause can stand alone in their respective contexts in (13) and (16): they are mutually dependent on one another in order to form a meaningful utterance. Therefore, these constructions are better analyzed in terms of discourse units, than a complex clause consisting of a (defective) main and subordinate clause.

- (13) ‘ \*~~hé wat leuk~~ *dat je belt.*  
 \* *hé wat leuk dat je belt.*

- (16) ‘ \**uh misschien dat ‘k mij morgen wat beter voel.*  
 \* *uh misschien dat ‘k mij morgen wat beter voel.*

14 Cf. Gras & Sansiñena (2015) on discourse-connective *que*-constructions in Spanish.

This observation also raises the question whether these *dat*-clauses are actually ‘subordinate’ in a grammatical sense.<sup>15</sup> In Dutch, the conjunction *dat* is an obligatory part of complement clauses, which therefore always triggers subordinate word order.<sup>16</sup> However, this fixed structural template for complement clauses obscures important characteristics of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions.

Insights from interactional linguistics and discourse-oriented studies shed another light on the functional and structural status of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions. Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions can be interpreted as subsequent units, either to a preceding turn, turn part, or a longer piece of discourse. As such, they represent extensions of dependency beyond the sentence level (cf. Mithun 2005, 2008, Lindström & Londen 2008).

An interesting and useful concept in this context is the distinction between ‘predication subordination’ and ‘discourse subordination’ (Lindström & Londen 2008: 146). Predication subordination involves a hierarchical, grammatical dependency which is typical of syntactically dependent clauses (e.g. *Ik acht het waarschijnlijk (ik denk) dat hij komt* ‘I think that he comes’). Discourse subordination, on the other hand, comprises sequential/incremental dependencies typical of narrative discourse and conversational language. It accounts for constructions that are pragmatically, but not syntactically, dependent on a ‘discoursal antecedent.’

Lindström & Londen (2008) do not analyze the conjunction ‘that’ in the traditional sense of a default subordinate marker introducing a declarative or nominal clause, but instead focus on its discourse function (i.e. “to point back to a preceding discourse source and respond to this and expand from this”; p. 145). Thus, the conjunction ‘that’ does not have a subordinating role at the sentence level, but a ‘sequential back-linking’ function at the

15 See Verhagen (2001, 2005) for discussion of the problematic status of complementation in syntactic analysis and the question whether complement constructions should be considered instances of subordination at all.

16 In other Germanic languages (e.g. English and Mainland Scandinavian) the complementizer ‘that’ is optional in complement constructions. Moreover, ‘subordinate word order’ appears not to be a reliable indicator of subordination, as it not (always) overtly marked in these related languages.

discourse level.<sup>17</sup> Under this analysis, the *dat*-clause is not embedded under a single matrix constituent (predication subordination), rather the entire semi-insubordinate construction is sequentially/incrementally and pragmatically dependent on a stretch of prior context (discourse subordination).

However, the fact that semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are more adequately described from a discourse perspective does not mean that predication subordination is an irrelevant concept in the analysis of these constructions. There is a synchronic continuum from predication to discourse subordination which is reflected by the varying degrees of (in)dependence that semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions display. They may refer to a specific part or entire stretch (the overall message) of prior discourse (cf. the examples in Section 4). Diachronically, semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions have their origin in complex clauses, but they can no longer be analyzed within the boundaries of a sentence (i.e. 'extension of dependency beyond the sentence').

Diachronically, there has been a structural and functional reanalysis of a complex clause from the sentence to the discourse level similar to 'instances where complement-taking predicates embedded in main clauses reduce to formulaic particles, parenthetical phrases etc.' (Evans 2007: 385). This involves 'integration of structure via a shift from multiclausal to single clause structure', whereby the former margin (= subordinate clause) has been reanalyzed as a single nucleus, 'and the former nucleus (= a full-blown matrix, e.g. *I think*) has been demoted to something that looks like a sentence adverb (comparable with *evidently*, *apparently*, etc.)' (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 207-209).

Recent functional analyses of the status of 'main' and 'subordinate' clauses in complement-taking predicate (CTP) constructions subscribe to a similar view. Thompson (2002) analyzes the 'main clause' parts in these constructions as 'epistemic/evidential/evaluative formulaic fragments expressing speaker stance toward the content of a clause.' In a similar vein, Verhagen (2005) considers the 'matrix elements' to be 'grammaticalized

17 For semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions, a parallel can be drawn with Lindström & London's (2008) analysis of the complex connectives (*så att* 'so (that)', *men att* 'but (that)', and *för att* 'for (that)') in Swedish. For constructions introduced by these complex connectives they observe that the first item specifies the semantic relation/function (causal, adversative and consecutive) and *att* denotes sequential back-linking. This insight can also be extended to semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions: the initial element specifies either a speaker oriented assessment (evaluative semi-insubordination) or the speaker's reasoning (discursive semi-insubordination), and *dat* serves to point back to prior context.

expressions for intersubjective coordination', whereas he regards the 'complement clauses' as 'main carrier of discourse continuity.'

## 6 Concluding summary

There are basically two types of initial elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions: evaluative and discursive ones. The former include elements that express speaker-oriented evaluations towards the content of the *dat*-clause (e.g. *misschien* 'maybe', *goed* 'good'; cf. Bos 1963, Aelbrecht 2006, Van linden & Van de Velde), the latter comprise a multitude of (non-evaluative) rhetoric elements which convey the speaker's reasoning with respect to the *dat*-clause in relation to (some aspect of) prior discourse (e.g. *dus* 'so', *toch* 'nonetheless' or *vandaar* 'therefore'). On the basis of this classification, I distinguish between evaluative and discursive semi-insubordination.

Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are predominantly found with initial elements that regularly appear as one-word responses, or short elliptical evaluations, which may convey the content of an entire clause (e.g. (*daarom*) *misschien*, *vandaar*, *wat jammer*, (*wat*) *vervelend* (*zeg*), *gelukkig* (*maar*), *vreemd* (*hoor*); cf. Bos's (1963) conditional sentence valence). Because of their responsive relation to prior statements, initial elements in semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions are better analyzed as discourse units (cf. Bos' 1963 'conditional sentence valence'; Section 4), than in terms of traditional word classes (e.g. either adverb or adjective).

It turned out that semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions cannot be accounted for within sentence-based accounts, which assume a hierarchical/grammatical dependency between a 'minimal matrix clause' and the *dat*-clause (e.g. Bos 1963, Aelbrecht 2006, Julien 2009, Van linden & Van de Velde 2014).<sup>18</sup> Semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions tend to stand in a serial relation to prior statements (= discourse subordination), rather than a construction internal hierarchical dependency between the initial element and the *dat*-clause (= predication subordination).

Analysis of the larger context and actual uses of semi-insubordinate *dat*-constructions revealed that their examination extends beyond the sentence level. That is, although instances of discursive and evaluative semi-insubordination constructions are syntactically independent units, they

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Struckmeier & Kaiser (2015) for a critical reflection of problems arising from analyzing insubordination phenomena on the basis of (formal) sentence type theories.

are pragmatically highly dependent on a discursual antecedent. As such, they represent various types of attitudinal/epistemic/rhetorical continuations, specifications, explanations or additional comments to previous statements.

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