

Verbs of deception, point of view and polarity

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1. Introduction

Making somebody wise would seem to be a laudable thing to do. However, in Dutch and German the combination *make wise*, rendered in these languages as *wijsmaken* and *weismachen* respectively, is used to express an act of deception. German *jemandem etwas weismachen* means to fool somebody into believing something false. Clearly, the compound verb has a noncompositional interpretation, which is derived from an older interpretation *to inform somebody about something*, possibly as a result of pragmatic entrenchment of an ironic use. Some typical examples are given in (1) for German and (2) for Dutch:

(1) German

- a. Sie können mir doch nicht weismachen, dass es stimmt.
you can me PRT not wise-make that it OK
“You can’t fool me into thinking that it is correct”
- b. Wir sollten uns doch nichts weismachen!
we should REFL PRT nothing wise-make
“We shouldn’t delude ourselves”

(2) Dutch

- a. Maak jezelf niet wijs dat de kans heel klein is
Make yourself not wise that the chance very small is
“Don’t fool yourself into believing that chances are very slim”
- b. Hem werd wijsgemaakt dat ze een Duitse was
him was wise-made that she a German was
“He was led to believe (falsely) that she was German”

The two verbs have the unusual property of being *contrafactive*, that is to say, they presuppose the falsity of their complement. Consider the following Dutch examples:

- (3) a. Ze maakte me wijs dat ze rijk was.
she made me wise that she rich was
“She fooled me into believing that she was rich”
- b. Maakte zij je wijs dat ze rijk was?
made she you wise that she rich was?
“Did she fool you into thinking that she was rich?”

- c. Ze heeft me niet wijsgemaakt dat ze rijk was
she has me not wise-made that she rich was
“She has not fooled me into believing that she was not rich”

The assertion in a, the question in b and the negative assertion in c all presuppose the falsehood of the complement clause. Similar observations apply to the German counterparts of these sentences. Holton (2017) claims that there are no such verbs, at least not simplex verbs, and draws from this the far-reaching conclusion that propositional attitude verbs relate to facts, not propositions. A proposition can be false, a fact cannot. Now *wijsmaken* and *weismachen* are not simple verbs, but given their noncompositional interpretation, they could be viewed as semantically atomic, and hence as counterexamples to Holton’s claim. Holton (2017: 247) notes that verbs such as *lie*, which might also be seen as contrafactive, do not take propositional complements. In his words: “one does not lie *that p*”. This claim does not appear to hold for all speakers of English, since there is sufficient evidence from corpora that the verb *lie* may be used in combination with *that*-clauses. Here is just one illustrative example from the COCA corpus (see www.english-corpora.org/coca/), but there are plenty more, and, moreover, do not appear to be slips of the pen or substandard usage:

- (4) A federal judge recently sanctioned the Manhattan lawyer for lying that his client was based in the UK instead of Brooklyn

Wijsmaken and *weismachen* are propositional attitude verbs that combine with finite complements (as well as nominal complements, most commonly pronouns denoting propositions, but occasionally full phrases such as *alternative Fakten* ‘alternative facts,’ a recent coinage for fibs and falsehoods). In Dutch, the most common complement is a *dat*-clause (equivalent to a *that*-clause in English) in indicative mood, in German either a *dass*-clause or a finite V2-clause, often in subjunctive (“Konjunktiv”) mood. All of this is unsurprising for verbs of communication in these languages.

Let us for a moment compare this to English verbs of deception. Apart from *deceive*, thesaurus.com lists among others the following verbs, all of which express various shades and aspects of deception. They are not perfect synonyms, but overlap semantically. Note that hardly any of them combine with finite clauses.

- (5) English verbs of deception: Bamboozle, betray, cheat, circumvent, defraud, delude, dupe, fool, hoodwink, swindle, take for a ride

You can take someone for a ride by telling them something false, for instance by claiming that you admire them (while secretly despising them). You can state this in German as follows:

- (6) Sie hat ihm weisgemacht, dass sie ihn bewundert.
she has him wise-made that she him admires
“She has taken him for a ride by claiming that she admires him”

Note that the English translation separates two elements which are combined in the German original: a verb (or verbal idiom) to describe the deceptive nature of the interaction between the two protagonists in general terms, and a verb of saying introducing the finite clause. This reminds one of Talmy’s theory of motion verbs (Talmy 1991), where he argues that English may conflate manner of motion and directed motion in a single verb, whereas Romance uses verbs to express motion and separate modifiers to indicate the manner. Here we have conflation in German and Dutch of two things: the act of communication and the fact that this act constitutes deception, which English mostly keeps separate, although some googling yields occasional examples of the verb *fool* followed by a finite complement, such as *I am trying to fool her that I am sleeping*. Perhaps this warrants some typological research in the spirit of Talmy. I should add here that verbs such as *wijsmaken* and *weismachen* are somewhat exceptional in Dutch and German as well, and that other verbs of deception, such as German *betrügen* ‘to deceive, betray’ do not have clausal complements.

2. Licensing of negative polarity items

A verb that presupposes the falsity of its complement would seem to be an ideal candidate for licensing negative polarity items. The literature identifies so-called emotive factive verbs and adjectives as triggers (cf. Linebarger 1987, Kadmon & Landman 1993, von Stechow 1999, Giannakidou 2006, Chierchia 2019, Duffley & Larrivé 2019). The general idea is that emotive factives carry a negative implicature which might be used to explain the possibility of polarity items. Compare the examples in (7):

- (7) a. I regret I said anything untoward. [\Rightarrow I wish I hadn't]
 b. I am amazed he did anything at all [\Rightarrow I expected him not to do anything]
 c. I am indignant that he offered them anything at all [\Rightarrow I consider it not acceptable that he did]

However, *wijsmaken* and its German counterpart *weismachen* do not appear to offer this option. In (8 a-b) I give some examples with the polarity items *ook maar iets* (Dutch) and *auch nur etwas* (German), which mean 'even anything' or, in more idiomatic English, 'anything at all'.

- (8) a. *Je maakt me wijs dat hij ook maar iets gezien had
 you make me wise that he anything_at_all seen had
 "You fool me into believing he had seen anything at all"
 b. *Hans versuchte mir weiszumachen
 Hans tried me make-believe
 dass er auch nur etwas gesehen hatte
 that he anything_at_all seen had
 "Hans tried to fool me into believing he had seen anything at all"

Note that verbs meaning *deny*, which do not presuppose but assert the falsity of their complements, are fine with these items:

- (9) a. Jan ontkende dat hij ook maar iets gezien had
 Jan denied that he anything_at_all seen had
 'Jan denied having seen anything at all'
 b. Hans leugnete das er auch nur etwas gesehen hatte
 Hans denied that he anything_at_all seen had
 'Hans denied having seen anything at all'

We can make sense of this by considering the notion of Strawson entailment, first introduced by von Stechow (1999):

- (10) Strawson Downward and Upward Entailingness
 A function f of type $\langle \sigma, \tau \rangle$ is Strawson-DE iff for all x, y of type σ such that $x \Rightarrow y$ (generalized entailment: x is more specific than y) and $f(x)$ is defined (i.e. its presuppositions are met): $f(y) \Rightarrow f(x)$.

A function f of type $\langle\sigma,\tau\rangle$ is Strawson-UE iff for all x, y of type σ such that $x \Rightarrow y$ (generalized entailment: x is more specific than y) and $f(x)$ is defined (i.e. its presuppositions are met): $f(x) \Rightarrow f(y)$.

Von Stechow (1999) has argued extensively that Strawson downward entailingness is the relevant property for polarity licensing. The following inference shows that *wijsmaken* is Strawson Upward Entailing, hence not a licenser of polarity items in its complement. The conclusion is valid if the presuppositions of the premise and the conclusion are met.

- (11) Piet maakte Marie wijs dat het hard regende (Piet told Marie falsely that it was raining hard)
It was not raining hard (presupposition of prior premise)
It was not raining (presupposition of conclusion)
 \therefore Piet maakte Marie wijs dat het regende (P. told M. falsely it was raining)

When matrix negation is added to the examples in (8), the polarity items become acceptable, see (12). Refer to (8) for glosses and translations.

- (12) a. Je maakt me niet wijs dat hij ook maar iets gezien had
b. Hans versuchte mir nicht weiszumachen dass er auch nur etwas gesehen hatte.

This is not entirely unexpected, given that matrix negation may sometimes license polarity items across factive predicates (Homer 2011, Hoeksema 2017), as illustrated below with the factive verb *realize*:

- (13) The family did not realize that anyone had broken into their home.

3. Pragmatic enrichment

3.1. Introduction

Wijsmaken and *weismachen* typically have [+human] indirect objects which serve as the victims of the fabrication. However, in the following idiomatic exclamations, animal participants show up (the b-example is Flemish Dutch, the a-example is standard Dutch):

- (14) a. Maak dat de kat wijs!
 make that the cat wise
 ‘Try and convince the cat of that = that is bullshit’
 b. Maak dat de ganzen wijs!
 make that the geese wise
 ‘Tell it to the geese = I don’t believe a word of it’

These expressions are somewhat similar to the colloquial English expression *Talk to the hand* (*‘cause the ears ain’t listening*). The latter conveys a strong disinterest on the part of the speaker in what the other has to say, whereas the Dutch cases convey disbelief. By using the expression *wijsmaken*, the speaker indicates that he or she regards the proposition, referred to by the anaphoric demonstrative *dat*, as false. The exclamations are not intended as ordering the hearer to go ahead and deceive some animals, cats, or geese, or whatever, but as expressions of disbelief. Something similar is going on in sentences such as the following (Dutch and German, respectively)

- (15) a. Je maakt mij niet wijs dat Fred komt.
 you make me not wise that Fred comes
 ‘You won’t fool me into believing Fred is coming’
 b. Sie machen mir nicht weis, es ist Ihnen ernst
 you make me not wise it is you earnest
 ‘You won’t get me to believe that you are serious’

These sentences are not really meant as predictions of the nonoccurrence of some event of deception. Rather, the speakers state disbelief. The speakers do not believe that Fred is coming (example 15a) or that you are being serious (15b). This comes about through an implicature of the relevance type. How can the speakers be confident that they are not going to be duped into believing some proposition *p*? Because they believe that *p* is false.

Somewhat more involved is the following example:

- (16) Bah! macht das weis, wem Ihr wollt, nur keinem
 bah, make that wise, whom you want, only no
 amerikanischen Arbeiter!
 American worker
 ‘Bah, tell that (bullshit) to anyone you want, just not to an
 American worker!’

This example can be read in two ways: (1) feel free to deceive whoever you like, but not an American worker (a straightforward literal reading), or (2) go ahead and deceive whoever you want, but you won't fool an American worker: they know better.

I propose that these examples are instances of pragmatic enrichment, aimed at expressing disbelief on the part of the indirect object of *wijsmaken/weismachen*. This enrichment requires a number of things to be true:

- (17) a. *wijsmaken/weismachen* appears in a future oriented context (mostly a simple present with future/habitual reading)
- b. under negation
- c. the referent of the indirect object must be available for establishing the point of view

In the following subsections, I address each of these points and adduce corpus data to underscore them. The Dutch corpus data are from the Lassy Large newspaper corpus, accessed through the online platform PaQu (Odijk et al. 2017). A search for all occurrences of the lemma *wijsmaken* yielded 834 sentences, and after removing double occurrences, the remaining 771 sentences were entered into a database, in which information about absence or presence of negation, modal context, subject, object and indirect object were added manually. The German corpus data are 500 sentences containing an occurrence of the lemma *weismachen*, taken from the deTenTen18 corpus, available at the SketchEngine platform (www.sketchengine.eu/).

3.2. Future orientation

Let me first say something about requirement (a), the presence of a future orientation. Compare the Dutch examples in (18)

- (18) a. Je hebt me niets wijsgemaakt.
 you have me nothing wise-made
 ‘You told me nothing untrue (I believe you)’
- b. Je maakt me niets wijs.
 you make me nothing wise
 ‘You are not fooling me (I don't believe you)’

Example (18a) is in the present perfect and states that no act of deception has taken place. Example (18b) is a future present: it states that no act of deception will take place, with the tacit understanding that this is because of a firm disbelief on the part of the speaker. Futurate uses of the simple past are no problem for pragmatic enrichment, cf. the Dutch examples in (19-20):

(19) Je maakt mij niet wijs dat het gremlins waren
 you make me not wise that it gremlins were
 ‘You’re not going to fool me that those were gremlins’

(20) Je maakte mij niet wijs dat gremlins bestonden
 you made me not wise that gremlins existed
 ‘You could not make me believe that gremlins existed’

Both examples are statements of disbelief. In the case of (20), disbelief on the part of the speaker is located in the past. It might be that the speaker believes in gremlins now, and is talking about a time when s/he did not.

Unlike the simple past, the present perfect does not have a futurate use, and is predicted to be impossible with the pragmatically enriched version of *wijsmaken/weismachen*. For the basic, non-enriched use of these verbs, however, there is no ban on using them with the perfect tense:

(21) Hij heeft ons wijsgemaakt dat we gewonnen hadden.
 he has us wise-made that we won had
 ‘He duped us into believing that we had won’

The future orientation of pragmatically enriched *wijsmaken* may come about in a number of ways: by futurate readings of simple present and simple past, or by the future auxiliaries *zullen* ‘shall, will’, and *gaan* ‘go, be going to’. In Dutch, the vast majority of cases involve the future present. Nonetheless, as a fraction of the entire distribution of *wijsmaken*, the future present uses are still relatively infrequent. In German, this is even more striking, as a comparison of the German and Dutch data in Table 1 shows. The category ‘Other’, which together with the category Future present covers all occurrences without an auxiliary, is much larger in Dutch than it is in German. German predominantly uses *weismachen* in nonfinite form, either a bare infinitive with a modal verb, a *zu*-infinitive with verbs of trying, or a participle with *haben* ‘have’ or *werden*, the passive auxiliary. Simple present and simple past forms with no auxiliary are rare, compared to Dutch.

Note that I have simplified the actual situation somewhat by ignoring multiple auxiliaries. In a case like *hat uns weismachen wollen* (“has wanted to fool us into believing”), I only listed the syntactically closest auxiliary, in this case *wollen*. The verb *have* belongs to *wollen*, not to *weismachen*. The predominance of *wollen* in the German data is remarkable. It is even possible to find cases of double *wollen* in our data set:

- (22) Du willst mir doch tatsächlich nicht weismachen wollen,
 you want me PRT really not wise-make want
 dass Hunde weidende Pferde mit Hunden verwechseln
 that dogs grazing horses with dogs confuse
 und diese deshalb jagen?
 and them therefore hunt
 ‘Surely you don’t want to have me believe that dogs confuse
 grazing horses with dogs, and therefore hunt them?’

context	German		Dutch		
	#	%		#	%
brauchen ‘need’	-	-	hoeven	9	1.2
futurate	3	0.6	futurate	65	8.4
haben ‘have’	25	5.0	hebben	112	14.5
imperative	4	0.8	imperative	19	2.5
können ‘can’	31	6.2	kunnen	40	5.2
lassen ‘let’	10	2.0	laten	48	6.2
mögen ‘want’	11	2.2	moeten ‘must’	55	7.1
sollen ‘should’	7	1.4	zullen ‘will’	6	0.8
versuchen ‘try’	45	9.0	proberen/trachten	53	6.5
werden (passive)	35	7.0	worden/zijn	14	1.8
wollen ‘want’	289	57.8	willen	21	2.7
other	40	8.0	other	314	40.7
Total	500	100		771	100

Table 1: Tense and modality in combinations with *weismachen/wijsmaken*

The following tables show strong interaction effects of the type of auxiliary and the presence of negation:

auxiliary		#	negated	% negated
wollen	want	289	33	11.4
versuchen	try	45	1	2.2
werden	passive be	35	1	2.9
können	can	31	18	58.1
haben	perfective have	25	4	16
lassen	let	10	5	50
imperative		4	2	50
futurate		3	3	100
none (imperfect)	40	-	-	0

Table 2 German *weismachen*: negation in 10 contexts

auxiliary		#	negated	% negated
hebben	perfective have	112	5	4.5
moeten	must/should	55	47	85.5
proberen/trachten	try	53	1	1.9
laten	let	48	33	68.8
kunnen	can	40	19	47.5
worden/zijn	passive be	14	-	-
mogen	may	9	6	66.7
hoeven	need	9	9	100
zullen	will	6	4	66.7
gaan	futurate go	5	4	80
imperative		17	6	35.3
futurate		65	65	100
none (imperfect)		312	-	-

Table 3: Dutch *wijsmaken*: negation in 13 contexts

3.3. Negation and other contexts

A requirement that negation be present suggest that *wijsmaken* and *weismachen* have developed a polarity-sensitive use. Pragmatic enrichment leading to polarity sensitivity is not unheard of, and I will give some examples of this below. For the moment, let us assume that this is indeed the case. Then the question arises, what, if anything, might bring the enriched use about, besides negation. After all, most polarity items are licensed by more than just negation: they appear in questions, conditional clauses, comparatives, relative clauses modifying universally quantified noun phrases, the scope of restrictive adverbs such as *only*, the scope of

weakly negative quantifiers and adverbs of quantification such as *few*, *little*, *less than N*, *at most N*, *seldom*, *rarely*, etc. (cf. Ladusaw 1979). It is also well-known that polarity items are not uniform in their distributional characteristics. There are items which require negation and nothing else, items which are fine in any of the above contexts, and a lot of different cases in between (cf. Zwarts 1986, van der Wouden 1997, Hoeksema 2012, Richter & Rado 2014, Schaebbicke et al. 2021).

Enriched *wijsmaken* appears in my data set with typical n-words, as well as *moeilijk* ‘with difficulty, hardly’, a polarity trigger in modal contexts (van der Wouden 1995) and *weinig* ‘little, few’. The German data also have an occurrence with *kaum* ‘hardly’.

Questions are a bit tricky. It seems that pragmatic enrichment is possible in questions, but these typically involve an additional auxiliary such as *willen* ‘want’ or *proberen* ‘try’, compare the following Dutch examples:

- (23) a. Wil je me wijsmaken dat dat mag?
 want you me wise-make that that may
 ‘Do you want me to believe that that is allowed?’
- b. Probeer je me wijs te maken dat je kunt zwemmen?
 try you me wise-to-make that you can swim
 ‘Are you trying to fool me into believing that you can swim?’
- c. #Maak je me wijs dat je kunt zwemmen?
 make you me wise that you can swim
 ‘Are you fooling me into believing that you can swim?’

Sentence (23c) is pragmatically odd, much like its English translation, whereas (23a,b) are fine as rhetorical questions. The main point here is that the referent of the indirect object in these questions, the speaker, is indirectly characterized as strongly believing that the embedded proposition is false. In the same manner, some *wh*-questions may be employed:

- (23) d. Wie wil je wijsmaken dat je kunt zwemmen?
 who want you wise-make that you can swim
 ‘Who do you want to fool into believing that you can swim?’

The question in (23d) could be an inquiry about a future act of deception, or it could be rhetorical, in which case the speaker wants to convey that he or she does not believe the addressee can swim.

Occurrences of *wijsmaken* and *weismachen* in comparative clauses with the counterparts of *than* and *as* are common but seem to lack the particular pragmatic interpretation we are after here. Consider for instance:

- (24) Er worden minder misdaden gepleegd dan
there get fewer crimes committed than
de regering de mensen wijsmaakt
the government the people wise-makes
'Fewer crimes are committed than the government wants the people
to believe'

Crucially, there is no implicature here that the referents of the indirect object (*de mensen* 'the people') do not believe the misleading information from the government. Presumably the speaker does not, based on his or her choice of words, but the people may or may not believe the information they receive.

German has less negation than Dutch in sentences with *weismachen/wijsmaken*. In part, this is attributed to a distribution difference that has not been mentioned so far: German *weismachen* often appears in parenthetical and comparative sentences with *wie* or *als* such as *wie die Regierung uns versucht weiszumachen, schneller als die Wissenschaftler uns weismachen wollten*, and within such clauses, negation is usually ruled out (Potts 2002). That the German data set has more of such occurrences could be due to corpus differences. The German corpus we used was a web corpus, and turned out to be full of angry comments directed at misinformation from the government, big business, the church, the media, mainstream scientists, liberals, atheists, Satan and other suspect sources. Fake news is a big topic on the German internet. The Dutch corpus, on the other hand, was a newspaper corpus, and Dutch newspapers, by and large, are not chockablock with conspiracy theories.

3.4. Point of view

The pragmatically enriched reading of *wijsmaken/weismachen* carries an implicature to the effect that the referent of the indirect object is confident that the embedded proposition is false, and therefore will not be swayed by the attempt at deception. Normally, this only makes sense if the speaker has access to the internal mental state of that referent. This could be based on prior knowledge of the beliefs of that person, assuming these are immutable, or because the speaker is an omniscient narrator, as in a novel, and so has

direct access to the thoughts and feelings of his characters. In free indirect discourse one could have something like the following, from *De vergelding* (a Dutch novel by Carry van Bruggen, 1923). Because of its length, I did not gloss it, but the crucial part is in italics.

- (25) Hij had willen weggaan, maar nu deed hij het niet. Verkoos niet uitgelachen te worden door dien lammen Verkerk.... met zijn kwasi-onverschilligheid. *Niemand maakte hem wijs* dat de vent zich niet geweldig voelde om zijn knappen kop. Knappe kop.... jawel....
'He had wanted to leave, but now he did not. Chose not to be laughed at by that lame Verkerk...with his so-called indifference. Nobody was going to make him believe that the guy did not feel great because of his handsome face. Handsome face..yeah right.'

One interesting property of the subject of *wijsmaken* I have referred to elsewhere, in connection with other predicates (Hoeksema 2018: 371) as *subject indiscriminacy*:

- (26) *Subject indiscriminacy of a predicate P*
For P, the identity of the subject is irrelevant. Whenever P is predicated of an individual within the relevant local context, it applies to all other individuals in that context.

A case where this property applies is the English expression *can hear a pin drop*. This verbal idiom is a positive polarity item, used to signify a high measure of silence. In a corpus study, 60 out of 65 occurrences had the subject *you*, in its generic use, although other subjects are entirely possible: *the audience could hear a pin drop, one could hear a pin drop, the spectators could hear a pin drop, the council members could hear a pin drop* etc. If all these options are available, why use the generic and not very informative pronoun *you* 60 out of 65 times? The answer is that the predicate is about silence, not so much about the people perceiving that silence. The silence should be perceived by any and all people witnessing the scene, which is why it sounds very odd to say that some of us could hear a pin drop, unless of course we are talking about an actual pin dropping, something which very well may be heard only by some people.

In the case of enriched *wijsmaken*, I want to maintain that the identity of the subject is likewise largely irrelevant. If I am convinced of

something, and am sure that you won't be able to change my mind about it, it does not matter who you are. We see this reflected in the corpus data. Negated cases in the present future appear 64 times, and you can see a predominance of second-person and generic pronouns. Generic pronouns are to be expected, given our earlier findings with *can hear a pin drop*. The second-person pronouns are appropriate in a dialogue setting, where you address the hearer in this way. But we see that random other subjects may appear as well, as we already saw in example (25), which is not from the corpus, by the way.

future present	Adriaanse	name	1
	Copca	name	1
	de nuchtere	the level-head	1
	Afrikaan	African	
	de veertiger	the 40 year old	1
	ge	you (Flemish)	1
	ik	I	1
	je	you	43
	niemand	nobody	4
	u	you (polite)	5
	verkopers	sellers	1
	ze	they (generic)	5
	Total		64

Table 4: Subjects *wijsmaken* in negative future present tense contexts

Strong predictors of the presence of negation are pairings of subject and indirect object. Two types of combinations stand out: second person subjects in combination with first person indirect objects, and generic subjects with first person indirect objects. The polite forms of the second person subjects are unambiguous, the weak form *je* on the other hand is ambiguous between second person use and generic use. I did attempt to tease these apart, since we are at ceiling level for *je* anyway. In the case of the weak third person subject pronoun *ze* 'they', there is ambiguity between referential use and generic use. Here it was possible to reliably classify 14 out of 15 cases as generic. The specialized generic pronoun *men* is on its way out in Dutch, hence the single occurrence with a first person indirect object.

SUBJ-IO		#	negated	% negated
je mij	you (weak), me (strong)	33	33	100%
je me	you (weak), me (weak)	6	6	100%
u mij	you (polite), me (strong)	1	1	100%
u me	you (polite), me (weak)	5	5	100%
ze mij	they (generic), me (strong)	14	12	85.7%
men mij	one (generic), me (strong)	1	1	100%

Table 5: Subject-indirect object combinations in Dutch

SUBJ-IO		#	negated	% negated
du mir	you me	21	19	90.5%
ihr mir	you (pl) me	2	2	100%
Sie mir	you (polite) me	9	9	100%
man mir	one (generic) me	5	2	40%

Table 6: Subject-indirect object combinations in German

Also interesting to note is the strong likelihood that the indirect object is first person singular, when the subject is a negative quantifier: for Dutch *niemand* all 13 occurrences in the data have either *me* or *mij* as the indirect object, and for German *keiner* 10 out of 10 occurrences are with *mir*, and for *niemand* it is 5 out of 7.

4. Analysis

The basis of the analysis is the postulation of an implicature which arises under rather specific circumstances. Let me write it quasi-formally as in (27), where the possibility symbol is indexed with the subject *j*, to indicate the person for whom the possible worlds are epistemic alternatives.

$$(27) \quad \neg\Diamond_j \text{Weismachen}(x,y,p) \quad \sim \text{Confident}(y, \neg p)$$

The possibility operator, I assume, not only applies to cases where there is an overt modal verb. Let us consider the case of the present futurate. I will assume this is a universal claim about epistemically accessible future worlds. A statement of the form *x makes y not wise that p* can be rendered as a claim that in no accessible future world *x* will deceive *y* regarding *p*:

(28) $\square_j \neg \text{Weismachen}(x,y,p)$

which happens to be equivalent to the formula to the left of the implicature arrow in (27). So we derive that present futurate occurrences of *weismachen* may give rise to the implicature as well.

Let us assume that the index *j* is deictically controlled by the speaker of the utterance, unless the point of view of the speaker is handed over to a third party, in cases of free indirect speech. This third party will be the referent of the indirect object. In that case, the following equation holds:

(29) $j = y$

Note also that the implicature, the stuff to the right of the squiggly arrow in (27), is a statement about the beliefs of *y*, and agent *x* is not even mentioned in it. This is how we account for the subject indeterminacy of *weismachen*.

We also have an account of the interaction with auxiliary verbs. The verb *können* ‘can’ and its Dutch counterpart *kunnen* have higher than expected occurrences of negation. Higher than expected, that is, if no notion of modality were to play a role. The Dutch verbs *zullen* and *gaan* can be analyzed similarly as the present futurate. What remains to be explained is why they are relatively infrequent, compared to the present futurate.

The Dutch verb *moeten* ‘must’ also has a high percentage of negative occurrences. I believe these cases are different in nature. We could treat them as in (28), since *moeten* is a positive polarity item and hence has scope over negation. However, the examples appear to be mainly deontic, not epistemic, and in a deontic context one would hope to see a preponderance of negative occurrences for verbs of deception. *Thou shalt not deceive* sounds like better advice than *You must deceive*. Also worth pointing out is the large number of reflexive pronouns (25 out of a total of 55 sentences with *moeten*) in the indirect object slot, as in e.g.

(30) Ik moet mezelf elke dag wijsmaken dat ik aantrekkelijk ben
I must myself each day wise-make that I attractive am
‘I have to fool myself every day that I am attractive’

The status of reflexive pronoun might be interesting to study further.

Finally a word about the German cases with *wollen*. Here we do not expect pragmatic enrichment and to a large degree we don’t. However, a few

remarks are in order. First of all, the negated cases often have an occurrence of the particle *doch* (8 out of 14 cases):

- (31) Du willst mir doch damit nicht weismachen, dass
you want me PRT with-that not wise-make, that
dass ein Kater von 9 Kg normal ist?
that a tomcat of 9 kilo normal is
'You won't fool me that a 9 kilo tomcat is normal with that'

In questions, occurrences of *weismachen* co-occur rather often with expressions such as *wirklich* (*really*), *im Ernste* (*seriously*), *allen Ernstes* (*in all seriousness*), *echt* (*really*), and *etwa* (*by any chance*). In all of these cases, the speaker signals incredulity or uncertainty. This creates the context for pragmatic enrichment. Incredulity is based on the assumption, perhaps premature, of impossibility, and in such a context the implicature in (27) arises. The speaker seems to want to assert emphatically that a 9 kilo cat is not normal. In other cases, no similar implicature is generated, as in the following example from our German corpus:

- (32) Mittlerweile habe ich eine sehr nette Hebamme, die mir nicht
weismachen will, wie toll Schmerzen und Wehen sind und bei der
ich meine eigene Meinung äußern darf.
'I now have a very nice midwife, one who does not want to have
me believe that pain and contractions are wonderful, and who
listens to my own opinions.'

Here the unpleasantness of being in labor is presupposed, assumed to be common ground, not at issue.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Pragmatic enrichment and polarity sensitivity are often in lockstep. This is certainly the case with scalar items, such as minimizers, which depend on scalar implicatures (Fauconnier 1975, Chierchia 2004). Other cases that come to mind are reflexives in copular sentences. These should be anomalous, since they are either contradictions or tautologies, depending on the presence or absence of negation, but they are fine with pragmatically enriched readings:

- (33) a. John is not himself today. [either a contradiction or pragmatically enriched as: not his usual self]
 b. At the farm, John can be himself. [tautology or pragmatically enriched as: be his true self]

Somewhat more similar to the topic of this talk is the following case of pragmatic enrichment in Dutch:

- (34) a. Je hoort mij niet zeggen dat hij onschuldig is
 you hear me not say that he innocent is
 ‘You won’t hear me say he is innocent’
 b. Ik hoor je niet zeggen dat hij onschuldig is.
 I hear you not say that he innocent is
 ‘I am not hearing you say that he is innocent’

In (34a), the most straightforward interpretation is one in which *horen zeggen* is a futurate reading of the simple present, and there is some form of pragmatic enrichment going on. The speaker cannot promise she or he won’t pronounce the “him” innocent, presumably because they are convinced of the opposite. So the implicature is: He is not innocent. On the other hand, (34b) is most plausibly translated as a describing the present, stating that the speaker is not hearing a pronouncement of innocence at the moment. The enriched meaning in (34a) requires negation, the compositional interpretation in (34b) does not. As with *wijsmaken*, the property of subject indiscriminacy holds. A corpus search (using the same Lassy newspaper corpus as for our data on *wijsmaken*) yielded the following subject-indirect object pairs for all cases where an implicature-reading was deemed possible:

SUBJ – IO	translation	#
je mij	you me	88
je me	you me [weak]	33
u mij	you [polite] me	19
u me	you, me [weak]	1
u ons	you [polite], us	3
je ons	you us	2
je <i>proper name</i>	you <i>proper name</i>	5
men me	one me	1

Table 7: subject-object combinations of negated *horen zeggen* ‘hear say’

In conclusion: the Dutch verb of deception *wijsmaken* and to a lesser extent also its German counterpart *weismachen* have developed a use in negative future-oriented sentences in which they generate an implicature of disbelief on the part of the person denoted by the indirect object. This entails a shift from the basic meaning as a verb of communication to a verb of cognition. Most commonly, the person whose disbelief is reported is the speaker, but when the indirect object is third-person, the point of view of a third-person entity is conveyed. In frameworks such as HPSG and construction grammar, such complex interactions of lexical meaning, argument structure, tense and negation with pragmatics are not just expected, but form part of the *raison d'être* of the constructionalist enterprise.

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